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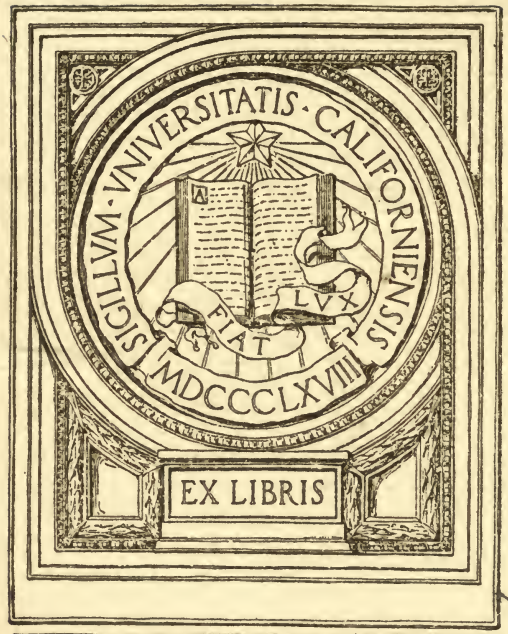
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THE DUSANTES

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A SEQUEL TO "THE CASTING AWAY OF MRS. LECKS AND MRS. ALESHINE"

BY

FRANK R. STOCKTON

NEW-YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE DUSANTES

A SEQUEL TO "THE CASTING AWAY OF MRS. LECKS AND MRS. ALESHINE"

PART I

WHEN the little party, consisting of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, Mr. Enderton, my newly made wife, and myself, with the red-bearded coxswain and the two sailor men, bade farewell to that island in the Pacific where so many happy hours had been passed, where such pleasant friendships had been formed, and where I had met my Ruth and made her my wife, we rowed away with a bright sky over our heads, a pleasant wind behind us, and a smooth sea beneath us. The long-boat was comfortable and well appointed, and there was even room enough in it for Mr. Enderton to stretch himself out and take a noonday nap. We gave him every advantage of this kind, for we had found by experience

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that our party was happiest when my father-in-law was best contented.

Early in the forenoon the coxswain rigged a small sail in the bow of the boat, and with this aid to our steady and systematic work at the oars we reached, just before nightfall, the large island whither we were bound, and to which, by means of the coxswain's pocket-compass, we had steered a direct course. Our arrival on this island, which was inhabited by some white traders and a moderate population of natives, occasioned great surprise, for when the boats containing the crew and passengers of our unfortunate steamer had reached the island, it was found that Mrs. Lecks, Mrs. Aleshine, and myself were missing. There were many suppositions as to our fate. Some persons thought we had been afraid to leave the steamer, and, having secreted ourselves on board, had gone down with her. Others conjectured that in the darkness we had fallen overboard, either from the steamer or from one of the boats; and there was even a surmise that we might have embarked in the leaky small boat — in which we really did leave the steamer — and so had been lost. At any rate, we had disappeared, and our loss was a good deal talked about, and, in a manner, mourned. In less than a week after their

arrival the people from the steamer had been taken on board a sailing vessel and carried westward to their destination.

We, however, were not so fortunate, for we remained on this island for more than a month. During this time but one ship touched there, and she was western bound and of no use to us, for we had determined to return to America. Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine had given up their journey to Japan, and were anxious to reach once more their country homes, while my dear Ruth and I were filled with a desire to found a home on some pleasant portion of the Atlantic seaboard. What Mr. Enderton intended to do we did not know. He was on his way to the United States when he left the leaking ship on which he and his daughter were passengers, and his intentions regarding his journey did not appear to have been altered by his mishaps.

By the western-bound vessel, however, Mrs. Aleshine sent a letter to her son.

Our life on this island was monotonous, and to the majority of the party uninteresting; but as it was the scene of our honeymoon, Mrs. Craig and I will always look back to it with the most pleasurable recollections. We were comfortably lodged in a house belonging to one of the traders, and

although Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine had no household duties to occupy their time, they managed to supply themselves with knitting materials from the stores on the island, and filled up their hours of waiting with chatty industry. The pipes of our sailor friends were always well filled, while the sands of the island were warm and pleasant for their backs, and it was only Mr. Enderton who showed any signs of impatient repining at our enforced stay. He growled, he grumbled, and he inveighed against the criminal neglect of steamship companies and the owners of sailing craft in not making it compulsory in every one of their vessels to stop on every voyage at this island, where, at any time, intelligent and important personages might be stranded.

At last, however, we were taken off by a three-masted schooner bound for San Francisco, at which city we arrived in due time and in good health and condition.

We did not remain long in this city, but soon started on our way across the continent, leaving behind us our three sailor companions, who intended to ship from this port as soon as an advantageous opportunity offered itself. These men heard no news of their vessel, although they felt quite sure that she had reached Honolulu, where

she had probably been condemned and the crew scattered. As some baggage belonging to my wife and my father-in-law had been left on board this vessel, I had hopes that Mr. Enderton would remain in San Francisco and order it forwarded to him there; or that he would even take a trip to Honolulu to attend to the matter personally. But in this I was disappointed. He seemed to take very little interest in his missing trunks, and wished only to press on to the East. I wrote to Honololu, desiring the necessary steps to be taken to forward the baggage in case it had arrived there; and soon afterwards our party of five started eastward.

It was now autumn, but, although we desired to reach the end of our journey before winter set in, we felt that we had time enough to visit some of the natural wonders of the California country before taking up our direct course to the East. Therefore, in spite of some petulant remonstrances on the part of Mr. Enderton, we made several trips to points of interest.

From the last of these excursions we set out in a stage-coach, of which we were the only occupants, towards a point on the railroad where we expected to take a train. On the way we stopped to change horses at a small stage station at the foot of a

range of mountains; and when I descended from the coach I found the driver and some of the men at the station discussing the subject of our route. It appeared that there were two roads, one of which gradually ascended the mountain for several miles, and then descended to the level of the railroad, by the side of which it ran until it reached the station where we wished to take the train. The other road pursued its way along a valley or notch in the mountain for a considerable distance, and then, by a short but somewhat steep ascending grade, joined the upper road.

It was growing quite cold, and the sky and the wind indicated that bad weather might be expected; and as the upper road was considered the better one at such a time, our driver concluded to take it. Six horses, instead of four, were now attached to our stage, and as two of these animals were young and unruly and promised to be unusually difficult to drive in the ordinary way, our driver concluded to ride one of the wheel horses, postilion fashion, and to put a boy on one of the leaders. Mr. Enderton was very much afraid of horses, and objected strongly to the young animals in our new team. But there were no others to take their places, and his protests were disregarded.

My wife and I occupied a back seat, having been ordered to take this comfortable position by Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, who had constituted themselves a board of instruction and admonition to Mrs. Craig, and, incidentally, to myself. They fancied that my wife's health was not vigorous and that she needed coddling; and if she had had two mothers she could not have been more tenderly cared for than by these good women. They sat upon the middle seat with their faces towards the horses, while Mr. Enderton had the front seat all to himself. He was, however, so nervous and fidgety, continually twisting himself about, endeavoring to get a view of the horses or of the bad places on the road, that Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine found that a position facing him and in close juxtaposition was entirely too uncomfortable; and consequently, the back of their seat being adjustable, they turned themselves about and faced us.

The ascent of the mountain was slow and tedious, and it was late in the afternoon when we reached the highest point in our route, from which the road descended for some eight miles to the level of the railroad. Now our pace became rapid, and Mr. Enderton grew wildly excited. He threw

open the window and shouted to the driver to go more slowly, but Mrs. Lecks seized him by the coat and jerked him back on his seat before he could get any answer to his appeals.

"If you want your daughter to ketch her death o' cold you 'll keep that window open!" As she said this, she leaned back and pulled the window down with her own strong right arm. "I guess the driver knows what he is about," she continued, "this not bein' the first time he 's gone over the road."

"Am I to understand, madam," said Mr. Enderton, "that I am not to speak to my driver when I wish him to know my will?"

To this question Mrs. Lecks made no answer, but sat up very straight and stiff, with her back square upon the speaker. For some time she and Mr. Enderton had been "out," and she made no effort to conceal the fact.

Mr. Enderton's condition now became pitiable, for our rapid speed and the bumping over rough places in the road seemed almost to deprive him of his wits, notwithstanding my assurance that stage-coaches were generally driven at a rapid rate down long inclines. In a short time, however, we reached a level spot in the road, and the team was drawn up and stopped. Mr. Enderton popped out

in a moment, and I also got down to have a talk with the driver.

"These hosses won't do much at holdin' back," he said, "and it worries 'em less to let 'em go ahead with the wheels locked. You need n't be afraid. If nothin' breaks, we 're all right."

Mr. Enderton seemed endeavoring to satisfy himself that everything about the running-gear of the coach was in a safe condition. He examined the wheels, the axles, and the whiffletrees, much to the amusement of the driver, who remarked to me that the old chap probably knew as much now as he did before. I was rather surprised that my father-in-law subjected the driver to no further condemnation. On the contrary, he said nothing except that for the rest of this down-hill drive he should take his place on the driver's unoccupied seat. Nobody offered any objection to this, and up he climbed.

When we started again Ruth seemed disturbed that her father should be in such an exposed position, but I assured her that he would be perfectly safe, and would be much better satisfied at being able to see for himself what was going on.

We now began to go down-hill again at a rate as rapid as before. Our speed, however, was not equal. Sometimes it would slacken a little where

the road was heavy or more upon a level, and then we would go jolting and rattling over some long downward stretch. After a particularly unpleasant descent of this kind the coach seemed suddenly to change its direction, and with a twist and an uplifting of one side it bumped heavily against something and stopped. I heard a great shout outside, and from a window which now commanded a view of the road I saw our team of six horses, with the drivers pulling and tugging at the two they rode, madly running away at the top of their speed.

Ruth, who had been thrown by the shock into the arms of Mrs. Aleshine, was dreadfully frightened, and screamed for her father. I had been pitched forward upon Mrs. Lecks, but I quickly recovered myself, and as soon as I found that none of the occupants of the coach had been hurt, I opened the door and sprang out.

In the middle of the road stood Mr. Enderton, entirely uninjured, with a jubilant expression on his face, and in one hand a large closed umbrella.

"What has happened?" I exclaimed, hurrying around to the front of the coach, where I saw that the pole had been broken off about the middle of its length.

"Nothing has happened, sir," replied Mr. En-

derton. "You cannot speak of a wise and discreet act, determinately performed, as a thing which has happened. We have been saved, sir, from being dashed to pieces behind that wild and unmanageable team of horses; and I will add that we have been saved by my forethought and prompt action."

I turned and looked at him in astonishment. "What do you mean?" I said. "What could you have had to do with this accident?"

"Allow me to repeat," said Mr. Enderton, "that it was not an accident. The moment that we began to go down-hill I perceived that we were in a position of the greatest danger. The driver was reckless, the boy incompetent, and the horses unmanageable. As my remonstrances and counsels had no effect upon the man, and as you seemed to have no desire to join me in efforts to restrain him to a more prudent rate of speed, I determined to take the affair into my own hands. I knew that the first thing to be done was to rid ourselves of those horses. So long as we were connected with them disaster was imminent. I knew exactly what ought to be done. The horses must be detached from the coach. I had read, sir, of inventions especially intended to detach runaway horses from a vehicle. To all intents and purposes our horses were runaways, or would have become

so in a very short time. I now made it my object to free ourselves from those horses. I got out at our first stop and thoroughly examined the carriage attachments. I found that the movable bar to which the whiffletrees were attached was connected to the vehicle by two straps and a bolt, the latter having a ring at the top and an iron nut at the bottom. While you and that reckless driver were talking together and paying no attention to me, the only person in the party who thoroughly comprehended our danger, I unbuckled those straps, and with my strong, nervous fingers, without the aid of implements, I unscrewed the nut from the bolt. Then, sir, I took my seat on the outside of the coach and felt that I held our safety in my own hands. For a time I allowed our vehicle to proceed, but when we approached this long slope which stretches before us, and our horses showed signs of increasing impetuosity, I leaned forward, hooked the handle of my umbrella in the ring of the bolt, and with a mighty effort jerked it out. I admit to you, sir, that I had overlooked the fact that the other horses were attached to the end of the pole, but I have often noticed that when we are discreet in judgment and prompt in action we are also fortunate. Thus was I fortunate. The hindermost horses, suddenly released, rushed upon those

in front of them, and, in a manner, jumbled up the whole team, which seemed to throw the animals into such terror that they dashed to one side and snapped off the pole, after which they went madly tearing down the road, entirely beyond the control of the two riders. Our coach turned and ran into the side of the road with but a moderate concussion, and as I looked at those flying steeds, with their riders vainly endeavoring to restrain them, I could not, sir, keep down an emotion of pride that I had been instrumental in freeing myself, my daughter, and my traveling companions from their dangerous proximity."

The speaker ceased, a smile of conscious merit upon his face. For the moment I could not say a word to him, I was so angry. But had I been able to say or do anything to indicate the wild indignation that filled my brain, I should have had no opportunity, for Mrs. Lecks stepped up to me and took me by the arm. Her face was very stern, and her expression gave one the idea of the rigidity of Bessemer steel.

"I've heard what has been said," she remarked, "and I wish to talk to this man. Your wife is over there with Mrs. Aleshine. Will you please take a walk with her along the road? You may stay away for a quarter of an hour."

"Madam," said Mr. Enderton, "I do not wish to talk to you."

"I did n't ask you whether you did or not," said Mrs. Lecks. "Mr. Craig, will you please get your wife away as quick and as far as you can?"

I took the hint, and, with Ruth on my arm, walked rapidly down the road. She was very glad to go, for she had been much frightened, and wanted to be alone with me to have me explain to her what had occurred. Mrs. Lecks, imagining from the expression of his countenance that Mr. Enderton had, in some way, been at the bottom of the trouble, and fearing that she should not be able to restrain her indignation when she found how he had done it, had ordered Mrs. Aleshine to keep Ruth away from her father. This action had increased the poor girl's anxiety, and she was glad enough to have me take her away and tell her all about our accident.

I did tell her all that had happened, speaking as mildly as I could of Mr. Enderton's conduct. Poor Ruth burst into tears.

"I do wish," she exclaimed, "that father would travel by himself! He is so nervous, and so easily frightened, that I am sure he would be happier when he could attend to his safety in his own way;

and I know, too, that we should be happier without him."

I agreed most heartily with these sentiments, although I did not deem it necessary to say so, and Ruth now asked me what I supposed would become of us.

"If nothing happens to the driver and the boy," I replied, "I suppose they will go on until they get to the station to which we were bound, and there they will procure a pole, if such a thing can be found, or, perhaps, get another coach, and come back for us. It would be useless for them to return to our coach in its present condition."

"And how soon do you think they will come back?" she said.

"Not for some hours," I replied. "The driver told me there were no houses between the place where we last stopped and the railroad station, and I am sure he will not turn back until he reaches a place where he can get either a new pole or another vehicle."

Ruth and I walked to a turn at the bottom of the long hill down which our runaway steeds had sped. At this point we had an extended view of the road as it wound along the mountain-side, but we could see no signs of our horses nor of any living thing. I did not, in fact, expect to see our

team, for it would be foolish in the driver to come back until he was prepared to do something for us, and even if he had succeeded in controlling the runaway beasts, the quicker he got down the mountain the better.

By the time we had returned we had taken quite a long walk, but we were glad of it, for the exercise tranquilized us both. On our way back we noticed that a road which seemed to come up from below us joined the one we were on a short distance from the place where our accident occurred. This, probably, was the lower road which had been spoken of when we changed horses.

We found Mr. Enderton standing by himself. His face was of the hue of wood ashes, his expression haggard. He reminded me of a man who had fallen from a considerable height, and who had been frightened and stupefied by the shock. I comprehended the situation without difficulty, and felt quite sure that had he had the choice he would have much preferred a thrashing to the plain talk he had heard from Mrs. Lecks.

"What is the matter, father?" exclaimed Ruth. "Were you hurt?"

Mr. Enderton looked in a dazed way at his daughter, and it was some moments before he appeared to have heard what she said. Then he

answered abruptly: "Hurt? Oh, no! I am not hurt in the least. I was just thinking of something. I shall walk on to the village or town, whichever it is, to which that man was taking us. It cannot be more than seven or eight miles away, if that. The road is down-hill, and I can easily reach the place before nightfall. I will then personally attend to your rescue, and will see that a vehicle is immediately sent to you. There is no trusting these ignorant drivers. No," he continued, deprecatingly raising his hand, "do not attempt to dissuade me. Your safety and that of others is always my first care. Exertion is nothing."

Without further words, and paying no attention to the remonstrances of his daughter, he strode off down the road.

I was very glad to see him go. At any time his presence was undesirable to me, and under the present circumstances it would be more objectionable than ever. He was a good walker, and there was no doubt he would easily reach the station, where he might possibly be of some use to us.

Mrs. Lecks was sitting on a stone by the roadside. Her face was still stern and rigid, but there was an expression of satisfaction upon it which had not been there when I left her. Ruth went

to the coach to get a shawl, and I said to Mrs. Lecks:

"I suppose you had your talk with Mr. Enderton?"

"Talk!" she replied. "I should say so! If ever a man understands what people think of him, and knows what he is, from his crown to his feet, inside and outside, soul, body, bones, and skin, and what he may expect in this world and the next, he knows it. I did n't keep to what he has done for us this day. I went back to the first moment when he began to growl at payin' his honest board on the island, and I did n't let him off for a single sin that he has committed since. And now I feel that I 've done my duty as far as he is concerned; and havin' got through with that, it 's time we were lookin' about to see what we can do for ourselves."

It was indeed time, for the day was drawing towards its close. For a moment I had thought we would give Mr. Enderton a good start, and then follow him down the mountain to the station. But a little reflection showed me that this plan would not answer. Ruth was not strong enough to walk so far; and although Mrs. Aleshine had plenty of vigor, she was too plump to attempt such a tramp. Besides, the sky was so heavily

overcast that it was not safe to leave the shelter of the coach.

As might have been expected, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine took immediate charge of the personal comfort of the party, and the first thing they did was to make preparations for a meal. Fortunately, we had plenty of provisions. Mrs. Aleshine had had charge of what she called our lunch-baskets, which were, indeed, much more like market-baskets than anything else; and having small faith in the resources of roadside taverns, and great faith in the unlimited capabilities of Mr. Enderton in the matter of consuming food on a journey, she had provided bounteously and even extravagantly.

One side of the road was bordered by a forest, and on the ground was an abundance of dead wood. I gathered a quantity of this, and made a fire, which was very grateful to us, for the air was growing colder and colder. When we had eaten a substantial cold supper and had thoroughly warmed ourselves at the fire, we got into the coach to sit there and wait until relief should come. We sat for a long time; all night, in fact. We were not uncomfortable, for we each had a corner of the coach, and we were plentifully provided with wraps and rugs.

Contrary to their usual habit, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine did not talk much. When subjected to the annoyances of an ordinary accident, even if it should have been the result of carelessness, their disposition would have prompted them to take events as they came, and to make the best of whatever might happen to them. But this case was entirely different. We were stranded and abandoned on the road, on the side of a lonely, desolate mountain, on a cold, bleak night; and all this was the result of what they considered the deliberate and fiendish act of a man who was afraid of horses, and who cared for no one in the world but himself. Their minds were in such a condition that if they said anything they must vituperate, and they were so kindly disposed towards my wife, and had such a tender regard for her feelings, that they would not, in her presence, vituperate her father. So they said very little, and, nestling into their corners, were soon asleep.

After a time Ruth followed their example, and, though I was very anxiously watching out of the window for an approaching light, and listening for the sound of wheels, I, too, fell into a doze. It must have been ten or eleven o'clock when I was awakened by some delicate but cold touches on

my face, the nature of which, when I first opened my eyes, I could not comprehend. But I soon understood what these cold touches meant. The window in the door of the coach on my side had been slightly lowered from the top to give us air, and through the narrow aperture the cold particles had come floating in. I looked through the window. The night was not very dark, for, although the sky was overcast, the moon was in its second quarter, and I could plainly see that it was snowing, and that the ground was already white.

This discovery sent a chill into my soul, for I was not unfamiliar with snows in mountain regions, and knew well what this might mean to us. But there was nothing that we could now do, and it would be useless and foolish to awaken my companions and distress them with this new disaster. Besides, I thought our situation might not be so very bad after all. It was not yet winter, and the snowfall might prove to be but a light one. I gently closed the window, and made my body comfortable in its corner, but my mind continued very uncomfortable for I do not know how long.

When I awoke, I found that there had been a heavy fall of snow in the night, and that the flakes were still coming down, thick and fast.

When Ruth first looked out upon the scene she was startled and dismayed. She was not accustomed to storms of this kind, and the snow frightened her. Upon Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine the sight of the storm produced an entirely different effect. Here was a difficulty, a discomfort, a hardship, but it came in a natural way, and not by the hand of a dastardly coward of a man. With naturally happening difficulties they were accustomed to combat without fear or repining. They knew all about snow, and were not frightened by this storm. The difficulties which it presented to their minds actually raised their spirits, and from the grim and quiet beings of the last evening they became the same cheerful, dauntless, ready women that I had known before.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, as she clapped her face to a window of the coach, "if this is n't a reg'lar old-fashioned snow-storm! I've shoveled my own way through many a one like it to git to the barn to do my milkin' afore the men folks had begun makin' paths, an' I feel jus' like as though I could do it ag'in."

"Now, Barb'ry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks, "if you 're thinkin' of shovelin' your way from this place to where your cows is, you 'd better step right out and get at it, and I really do think that

if you felt they were sufferin' for want of milkin' you 'd make a start."

"I don't say," answered Mrs. Aleshine, with an illuminating grin, "that if the case was that way I might n't have the hankerin' though not the capableness, but I don't know that there 's any place to shovel our way to jus' now."

Mrs. Lecks and I thought differently. Across the road, under the great trees, the ground was comparatively free from snow, and in some places, owing to the heavy evergreen foliage, it was entirely bare. It was very desirable that we should get to one of these spots and build a fire, for, though we had been well wrapped up, we all felt numbed and cold. In the boot at the back of the coach I knew that there was an ax, and I thought I might possibly find there a shovel. I opened the coach door and saw that the snow was already above the lower step. By standing on the spokes of the back wheel I could easily get at the boot, and I soon pulled out the ax, but found no shovel. But this did not deter me. I made my way to the front wheel and climbed up to the driver's box, where I knocked off one of the thin planks of the foot-board, and this, with the ax, I shaped into a rude shovel with a handle rather too wide but serviceable. With this I went vigorously to

work, and soon had made a pathway across the road. Here I chopped off some low dead branches, picked up others, and soon had a crackling fire, around which my three companions gathered with delight.

A strong wind was now blowing, and the snow began to form into heavy drifts. The fire was very cheery and pleasant, but the wind was cutting, and we soon returned to the shelter of the coach, where we had our breakfast. This was not altogether a cold meal, for Mrs. Aleshine had provided a little tea-kettle, and, with some snow-water which I brought in boiling from the fire in the woods, we had all the hot and comforting tea we wanted.

We passed the morning waiting and looking out and wondering what sort of conveyance would be sent for us. It was generally agreed that nothing on wheels could now be got over the road, and that we must be taken away in a sleigh.

"I like sleigh-ridin'," said Mrs. Aleshine, "if you're well wrapped up, with good horses, an' a hot brick for your feet, but I must say I don't know but what I'm goin' to be a little skeery goin' down these long hills. If we git fairly slidin', hosses, sleigh, an' all together, there's no knowin' where we'll fetch up."

"There's one comfort, Barb'ry," remarked Mrs. Lecks, "and that is that when we do fetch up it 'll be at the bottom of the hills, and not at the top; and as the bottom is what we want to get to, we ought n't to complain."

"That depends a good deal whether we come down hindpart foremost, or forepart front. But nobody 's complainin' so fur, specially as the sleigh is n't here."

I joined in the outlooking and the conjectures, but I could not keep up the cheerful courage which animated my companions; for not only were the two elder women bright and cheery, but Ruth seemed to be animated and encouraged by their example, and showed herself as brave and contented as either of them. She was convinced that her father must have reached the railroad station before it began to snow, and, therefore, she was troubled by no fears for his safety. But my mind was filled with many fears.

The snow was still coming down, thick and fast, and the wind was piling it into great drifts, one of which was forming between the coach and a low embankment on that side of the road near which it stood.

About every half hour I took my shovel and cleared out the path across the road from the

other side of the coach to the woods. Several times after doing this I made my way among the trees, where the snow did not impede my progress, to points from which I had a view some distance down the mountain, and I could plainly see that there were several places where the road was blocked up by huge snow-drifts. It would be a slow, laborious, and difficult undertaking for any relief party to come to us from the station; and who was there, at that place, to come? This was the question which most troubled me. The settlement at the station was, probably, a very small one, and that there should be found at that place a sleigh or a sledge with enough men to form a party sufficiently strong to open a road up the mountain-side was scarcely to be expected. Men and vehicles might be obtained at some point farther along the railroad, but action of this kind would require time, and it was not unlikely that the railroad itself was blocked up with snow. I could form no idea, satisfactory to myself, of any plan by which relief could come to us that day. Even the advent of a messenger on horseback was not to be expected. Such an adventurer would be lost in the storm and among the drifts. On the morrow relief might come, but I did not like to think too much about the morrow; and

of any of my thoughts and fears I said nothing to my companions.

At intervals, after I had freshly cleared out the pathway, the three women, well bundled up, ran across the road to the fire under the trees. This was the only way in which they could keep themselves warm, for the coach, although it protected us from the storm, was a very cold place to sit in. But the wind and the snow which frequently drove in under the trees made it impossible to stay very long by the fire, and the frequent passages to and from the coach were attended with much exposure and wetting of feet. I therefore determined that some better way must be devised for keeping ourselves warm; and, shortly after our noonday meal, I thought of a plan, and immediately set to work to carry it out.

The drift between the coach and the embankment had now risen higher than the top of the vehicle, against one side of which it was tightly packed. I dug a path around the back of the coach, and then began to tunnel into the huge bank of snow. In about an hour I had made an excavation nearly high enough for me to stand in, and close to the stage door on that side; and I cleared away the snow so that this door could open into the cavern I had formed. At the end

opposite the entrance of my cave, I worked a hole upwards until I reached the outer air. This hole was about a foot in diameter, and for some time the light unpacked snow from above kept falling in and filling it up; but I managed, by packing and beating the sides with my shovel, to get the whole into a condition in which it would retain the form of a rude chimney.

Now I hurried to bring wood and twigs, and having made a hearth of green sticks, which I cut with my ax, I built a fire in this snowy fire-place. Mrs. Lecks, Mrs. Aleshine, and Ruth had been watching my proceedings with great interest; and when the fire began to burn, and the smoke to go out of my chimney, the coach door was opened, and the genial heat gradually pervaded the vehicle.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, "if that is n't one of the brightest ideas I ever heard of! A fire in the middle of a snow-bank, with a man there a-tendin' to it, an' a chimney! 'T is n't every day that you can see a thing like that!"

"I should hope not," remarked Mrs. Lecks, "for if the snow drifted this way every day, I 'd be ready to give up the seein' business out-an'-out! But I think, Mr. Craig, you ought to pass that shovel in to us so that we can dig you out

when the fire begins to melt your little house and it all caves in on you."

"You can have the shovel," said I, "but I don't believe this snow-bank will cave in on me. Of course the heat will melt the snow, but I think it will dissolve gradually, so that the caving in, if there is any, won't be of much account, and then we shall have a big open space here in which we can keep up our fire."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Ruth, "you talk as if you expected to stay here ever so long, and we certainly can't do that. We should starve to death, for one thing."

"Don't be afraid of that," said Mrs. Aleshine. "There 's plenty of victuals to last till the people come for us. When I pack baskets for travelin' or picnickin', I don't do no scrimpin'. An' we 've got to keep up a fire, you know, for it would n't be pleasant for those men, when they 've cut a way up the mountain to git at us, to find us all froze stiff."

Mrs. Lecks smiled. "You 're awful tender of the feelin's of other people, Barb'ry," she said, "and a heart as warm as yourn ought to keep from freezin'."

"Which it has done, so far," said Mrs. Aleshine complacently.

As I had expected, the water soon began to drip from the top and the sides of my cavern, and the chimney rapidly enlarged its dimensions. I made a passage for the melted snow to run off into a hollow, back of the coach; and as I kept up a good strong fire, the drops of water and occasional pieces of snow which fell into it were not able to extinguish it. The cavern enlarged rapidly, and in a little more than an hour the roof became so thin that while I was outside collecting wood it fell in and extinguished the fire. This accident, however, interrupted my operations but for a short time. I cleared away the snow at the bottom of the excavation, and rebuilt my fire on the bare ground. The high snow walls on three sides of it protected it from the wind, so that there was no danger of the flames being blown against the stage-coach, while the large open space above allowed a free vent for the smoke.

About the middle of the afternoon, to the great delight of us all, it stopped snowing, and when I had freshly shoveled out the path across the road, my companions gladly embraced the opportunity of walking over to the comparatively protected ground under the trees and giving themselves a little exercise. During their absence I was busily engaged in arranging the fire, when I heard a low

crunching sound on one side of me, and, turning my head, I saw in the wall of my excavation opposite to the stage-coach and at a distance of four or five feet from the ground an irregular hole in the snow, about a foot in diameter, from which protruded the head of a man. This head was wrapped, with the exception of the face, in a brown woolen comforter. The features were those of a man of about fifty, a little sallow and thin, without beard, whiskers, or mustache, although the cheeks and chin were darkened with a recent growth.

The astounding apparition of this head projecting itself from the snow wall of my cabin utterly paralyzed me, so that I neither moved nor spoke, but remained crouching by the fire, my eyes fixed upon the head. It smiled a little, and then spoke.

"Could you lend me a small iron pot?" it said.

I rose to my feet, almost ready to run away. Was this a dream? Or was it possible that there was a race of beings who inhabited snow-banks?

The face smiled again very pleasantly. "Do not be frightened," it said. "I saw you were startled, and spoke first of a familiar pot in order to reassure you."

"Who, in the name of Heaven, are you?" I gasped.

"I am only a traveler, sir," said the head, "who has met with an accident similar, I imagine, to that which has befallen you. But I cannot further converse with you in this position. Lying thus on my breast in a tunnel of snow will injuriously chill me. Could you conveniently lend me an iron pot?"

I was now convinced that this was an ordinary human being, and my courage and senses returned to me, but my astonishment remained boundless. "Before we talk of pots," I said, "I must know who you are and how you got into that snow-bank."

"I do not believe," said my visitor, "that I can get down, head foremost, to your level. I will therefore retire to my place of refuge, and perhaps we can communicate with each other through this aperture."

"Can I get through to your place of refuge?" I asked.

"Certainly," was the answer. "You are young and active, and the descent will not be so deep on my side. But I will first retire, and will then project towards you this sheep-skin rug, which, if kept under you as you move forward, will protect your breast and arms from direct contact with the snow."

It was difficult to scramble up into the hole, but I succeeded in doing it, and found awaiting me the sheep-skin rug, which, by the aid of an umbrella, the man had pushed towards me for my use. I was in a horizontal tunnel barely large enough for the passage of my body, and about six feet in length. When I had worked my way through this and had put my head out of the other end, I looked into a small wooden shed, into which light entered only through a pane of glass set in a rude door opposite to me. I immediately perceived that the whole place was filled with the odor of spirituous liquors. The man stood awaiting me, and by his assistance I descended to the floor. As I did so I heard something which sounded like a titter, and looking around I saw in a corner a bundle of clothes and traveling-rugs, near the top of which appeared a pair of eyes. Turning again, I could discern in another corner a second bundle, similar to, but somewhat larger than, the other.

"These ladies are traveling with me," said the man, who was now wrapping about him a large cloak, and who appeared to be of a tall though rather slender figure. His manner and voice were those of a gentleman extremely courteous and considerate. "As I am sure you are curi-

ous — and this I regard as quite natural, sir — to know why we are here, I will at once proceed to inform you. We started yesterday in a carriage for the railway station, which is, I believe, some miles beyond this point. There were two roads from the last place at which we stopped, and we chose the one which ran along a valley and which we supposed would be the pleasanter of the two. We there engaged a pair of horses which did not prove very serviceable animals, and, at a point about a hundred yards from where we now are, one of them gave out entirely. The driver declared that the only thing to be done was to turn loose the disabled horse, which would be certain, in time, to find his way back to his stable, and for him to proceed on the other animal to the station to which we were going, where he would procure some fresh horses and return as speedily as possible. To this plan we were obliged to consent, as there was no alternative. He told us that if we did not care to remain in the carriage, there was a shed by the side of the road, a little farther on, which was erected for the accommodation of men who are sometimes here in charge of relays of horses. After assuring us that he would not be absent more than three hours, he rode away, and we have not seen him

since. Soon after he left us I came up to this shed, and finding it tight and comparatively comfortable, I concluded it would give us relief from our somewhat cramped position in the carriage, and so conducted the ladies here. As night drew on it became very cold, and I determined to make a fire, a proceeding which of course would have been impossible in a vehicle. Fortunately I had with me, at the back of the carriage, a case of California brandy. By the aid of a stone I knocked the top off this case, and brought hither several of the bottles. I found in the shed an old tin pan which I filled with the straw coverings of the bottles, and on this I poured brandy, which, being ignited, produced a fire without smoke, but which, as we gathered around it, gave out considerable heat."

As the speaker thus referred to his fuel, I understood the reason of the strong odor of spirits which filled the shed, and I experienced a certain relief in my mind.

The gentleman continued: "At first I attributed the delay of the driver's return to those ordinary hindrances which so frequently occur in rural and out-of-the-way places; but, after a time, I could not imagine any reasonable cause for his delay. As it began to grow dark I brought here our pro-

vision baskets, and we partook of a slight repast. I then made the ladies as comfortable as possible and awaited with much anxiety the return of the driver.

"After a time it began to snow, and feeling that the storm might interrupt communication with the carriage, I brought hither, making many trips for the purpose, the rest of the brandy, our wraps and rugs, and the cushions of the carriage. I did not believe that we should be left here all night, but thought it prudent to take all precautions and to prepare for remaining in a place where we could have a fire. The morning showed me that I had acted wisely. As you know, sir, I found the road in either direction completely blocked up by snow, and I have since been unable to visit the carriage."

"Have you not all suffered from cold?" I inquired. "Have you food enough?"

"I will not say," replied the gentleman, "that in addition to our anxiety we have not suffered somewhat from cold, but for the greater part of this day I have adopted a plan which has resulted in considerable comfort to my companions. I have wrapped them up very closely and warmly, and they hold in each hand a hard-boiled egg. I thought it better to keep these for purposes of

warmth than to eat them. About every half hour I reboil the eggs in a little traveling teapot which we have. They retain their warmth for a considerable period, and this warmth in a moderate degree is communicated through the hands to the entire person."

As he said this a low laugh again burst forth from the bundle in one corner of the room, and I could not help smiling at this odd way of keeping warm. I looked towards the jocose bundle and remarked that the eggs must be pretty hard by this time.

"These ladies," said the gentleman, "are not accustomed to the cold atmosphere of this region, and I have, therefore, forbidden them to talk, hoping thus to prevent injury from the inhalation of frosty air. So far we have not suffered, and we still have some food left. About noon I noticed smoke floating over this shed, and I forced open the door and made my way for some little distance outside, hoping to discover whence it came. I then heard voices on the other side of the enormous snow-drift behind us, but I could see no possible way of getting over the drift. Feeling that I must, without fail, open communication with any human beings who might be near us, I attempted to shout, but the cold had so affected my voice

that I could not do so. I thereupon set my wits to work. At the back of this shed is a small window closed by a wooden shutter. I opened this shutter and found outside a wall of snow packed closely against it. The snow was not very hard, and I believed that it would not be difficult to tunnel a way through it to the place where the voices seemed to be. I immediately set to work, for I feared that if we were obliged to remain here another night without assistance we should be compelled to-morrow morning to eat those four hard-boiled eggs which the ladies are holding, and which, very shortly, I must boil again."

"How did you manage to cut through the snow?" I asked. "Had you a shovel?"

"Oh, no," replied the other. "I used the tin pan. I found it answered very well as a scoop. Each time that I filled it I threw the contents out of our door."

"It must have been slow and difficult work," I said.

"Indeed it was," he replied. "The labor was arduous and occupied me several hours. But when I saw a respectable man at a fire, and a stage-coach near by, I felt rewarded for all my trouble. May I ask you, sir, how you came to be thus snow-bound?"

I then briefly related the circumstances of our mishap, and had scarcely finished when a shrill sound came through the tunnel into the shed. It was the voice of Mrs. Aleshine.

"Hello!" she screamed, "are you in there? An' you don't mean to tell me there are other people in that hole?"

Feeling quite certain that my wife and her companions were in a state of mental agitation on the other side of the drift, I called back that I would be with them in a moment, and then explained to the gentleman why I could not remain with him longer. "But before I go," I said, "is there anything I can do for you? Do you really want an iron pot?"

"The food that remains to us," he answered, "is fragmentary and rather distasteful to the ladies, and I thought if I could make a little stew of it, it might prove more acceptable to them. But do not let me detain you another instant from your friends, and I advise you to go through that tunnel feet foremost, for you might otherwise experience difficulties in getting out at the other end."

I accepted his suggestion, and by his assistance and the help of the rough window-frame, I got into the hole feet first, and soon ejected myself

into the midst of my alarmed companions. When they heard where I had been, and what I had seen, they were naturally astounded.

"Another party deserted at this very point!" exclaimed Ruth, who was both excitable and imaginative. "This looks like a conspiracy! Are we to be robbed and murdered?"

At these words Mrs. Aleshine sprang towards me. "Mr. Craig," she exclaimed, "if it's robbers, don't lose a minute! Never let 'em git ahead of you! Pull out your pistol and fire through the hole!"

"Gracious me, Barb'ry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks, "you don't suppose the robbers is them poor unfortunates on the other side of the drift! And I must say, Mrs. Craig, that if there was any such thing as a conspiracy, your father must have been in it, for it was him who landed us just here. But of course none of us supposes nothin' of that kind, and the first thing we 've got to think of is what we can do for them poor people."

"They seem to have some food left, but not much," I said, "and I fear they must be suffering from cold."

"Could n't we poke some wood to them through this hole?" said Mrs. Aleshine, whose combative feelings had changed to the deepest compassion.

"I should think they must be nearly froze, with nothin' to warm 'em but hard-b'iled eggs."

I explained that there was no place in their shed where they could build a fire, and proposed that we should give them some hot tea and some of our provisions.

"That 's so!" said Mrs. Aleshine. "An' jus' shout in to them that if they 'll shove them eggs through the hole, I 'll bile 'em fur 'em as often as they want 'em."

"I 've just got to say this," ejaculated Mrs. Lecks, as she and Mrs. Aleshine were busily placing a portion of our now very much reduced stock of provisions in the smallest of our baskets: "This is the first time in my life that I ever heard of people warmin' themselves up with hens' eggs and spirits, excep' when mixed up into egg-nog; and that they resisted that temptation and contented themselves with plain honest heat, though very little of it, shows what kind of people they must be. And now do you suppose we could slide this basket in without upsettin' the little kittle?"

I called to the gentleman that we were about to send him a basket, and then, by the aid of an umbrella, I gently pushed it through the snow-tunnel to a point where he could reach it. Hearty

thanks came back to us through the hole, and when the basket and kettle were returned, we prepared our own evening meal.

"For the life of me," said Mrs. Lecks, as she sipped a cup of tea, "I can't imagine, if there was a shed so near us, why we did n't know it."

"That has been puzzling me," I replied; "but the other road, on which the shed is built, is probably lower than this one, so that the upper part of the shed could not have projected far above the embankment between the two roads, and if there were weeds and dead grasses on the bank, as there probably were, they would have prevented us from noticing the top of a weather-worn shed."

"Especially," said Mrs. Lecks, "as we was n't lookin' for sheds, and, as far as I know, we was n't lookin' for anythin' on that side of the coach, for all my eyes was busy starin' about on the side we got in and out of, and down the road."

"Which mine was too," added Mrs. Aleshine. "An' after it begun to snow we could n't see nothin' anyhow, partic'larly when everything was all covered up."

"Well," added Mrs. Lecks in conclusion, "as we did n't see the shed, it 's a comfort to think there was reasons for it and that we are not born fools."

It was now growing dark, and but few further communications took place through the little tunnel.

"Before we get ready to go to sleep," said Mrs. Aleshine, "for, havin' no candles, I guess we won't sit up late, had n't we better rig up some kind of a little sled to put in that hole, with strings at both ends, so that we kin send in mustard-plasters and peppermint to them poor people if they happen to be sick in the night?"

This little project was not considered necessary, and after receiving assurances from the gentleman on the other side that he would be able to keep his party warm until morning, we bade each other good-night, and after having replenished the fire, I got into the stage, where my companions had already established themselves in their corners. I slept very little, while I frequently went out to attend to the fire, and my mind was racked by the most serious apprehensions. Our food was nearly gone, and if relief did not come to us very soon I could see nothing but a slow death before us, and, so far as I could imagine, there was no more reason to expect succor on the following day than there had been on the one just passed. Where were the men to be found who could cut a road to us through those miles of snow-drifts?

Very little was said during the night by my companions, but I am sure that they felt the seriousness of our situation, and that their slumbers were broken and unrefreshing. If there had been anything to do, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine would have been cheered up by the prospect of doing it; but we all felt that there was nothing we could do.

PART II

AFTER a second night spent in the stage-coach on that lonely and desolate mountain-road where we were now snow-bound, I arose early in the morning and went into the forest to collect some fuel; and while thus engaged I made the discovery that the snow was covered with a hard crust which would bear my weight. After the storm had ceased the day before, the sun had shone brightly and the temperature had moderated very much, so that the surface of the snow had slightly thawed. During the night it became cold again, and this surface froze into a hard coating of ice. When I found I could walk where I pleased, my spirits rose, and I immediately set out to view the situation. The aspect of the road gave me no encouragement. The snowfall had been a heavy one, but had it not been for the high wind which accompanied it, it would have thrown but moderate difficulties in the way of our rescue. Reach-

ing a point which commanded a considerable view along the side of the mountain, I could see that in many places the road was completely lost to sight on account of the great snow-drifts piled up on it. I then walked to the point where the two roads met, and crossing over, I climbed a slight rise in the ground which had cut off my view in this direction, and found myself in a position from which I could look directly down the side of the mountain below the road.

Here the mountain-side, which I had supposed to be very steep and rugged, descended in a long and gradual slope to the plains below, and for the greater part of the distance was covered by a smooth, shining surface of frozen snow, unbroken by rock or tree. This snowy slope apparently extended for a mile or more, and then I could see that it gradually blended inself into the greenish-brown turf of the lower country. Down there in the valley there still were leaves upon the trees, and there were patches of verdure over the land. The storm which had piled its snows up here had given them. rain down there and had freshened everything. It was like looking down into another climate, and on another land. I saw a little smoke coming up behind a patch of trees. It must be that there was a house there! Could

it be possible that we were within a mile or two of a human habitation? Yet, what comfort was there in that thought? The people in that house could not get to us nor we to them, nor could they have heard of our situation, for the point where our road reached the lower country was miles farther on.

As I stood thus and gazed, it seemed to me that I could make a run and slide down the mountain-side into green fields, into safety, into life. I remembered those savage warriors who, looking from the summits of the Alps upon the fertile plains of Italy, seated themselves upon their shields and slid down to conquest and rich spoils.

An idea came into my mind, and I gave it glad welcome. There was no time to be lost. The sun was not yet high, but it was mounting in a clear sky, and should its rays become warm enough to melt the crust on which I stood, our last chance of escape would be gone. To plow our way to any place, through deep, soft snow, would be impossible. I hurried back to our coach, and found three very grave women standing around the fire. They were looking at a small quantity of food at the bottom of a large basket.

"That's every crumb there is left," said Mrs. Aleshine to me, "and when we pass in some to

them unfortunates on the other side of the drift,—which, of course, we're bound to do,—we'll have what I call a skimpy meal. And that's not the worst of it. Until somebody gets up to us, it will be our last meal."

I took my poor Ruth by the hand, for she was looking very pale and troubled, and I said: "My dear friends, nobody can get up to this place for a long, long time; and before help could possibly reach us we should all be dead. But do not be frightened. It is not necessary to wait for any one to come to us. The snow is now covered with a crust which will bear our weight. I have thought of a way in which we can slide down the mountain-side, which, from a spot where I have been standing this morning, is no steeper than some coasting hills, though very much longer. In a few minutes we can pass from this region of snow, where death from cold and starvation must soon overtake us, to a grassy valley where there is no snow, and where we shall be within walking distance of a house in which people are living."

Ruth grasped my arm. "Will it be safe?" she exclaimed.

"I think so," I answered. "I see no reason why we should meet with any accident. At any rate, it is much safer than remaining here for

another hour; for if the crust melts, our last chance is gone."

"Mr. Craig," said Mrs. Lecks, "me and Mrs. Aleshine is no hands at coastin' down-hill, havin' given up that sort of thing since we was little girls with short frocks and it did n't make no matter any way. But you know more about these things than we do; and if you say we can get out of this dreadful place by slidin' down-hill, we 're ready to follow, if you 'll just go ahead. We followed you through the ocean with nothin' between our feet and the bottom but miles o' water and nobody knows what sorts of dreadful fish, and when you say it 's the right way to save our lives, we 're ready to follow you again. And as for you, Mrs. Ruth, don't you be frightened. I don't know what we 're goin' to slide on, but, whatever it is, even if it 's our own selves, me and Mrs. Aleshine will take you between us, and if anything is run against, we 'll get the bumps, and not you."

I was delighted to see how rapidly my proposition was accepted, and we made a hasty breakfast, first sending in some of our food to the other party. The gentleman reported through the hole of communication that they were all fairly well, but a good deal stiffened by cold and want of

exercise. He inquired, in a very anxious voice, if I had discovered any signs of approaching relief. To this I replied that I had devised a plan by which we could get ourselves out of our present dangerous situation, and that in a very short time I would come around to the door of his shed — for I could now walk on the crusted snow — and tell him about it. He answered that these words cheered his heart, and that he would do everything possible to coöperate with me.

I now went to work vigorously. I took the cushions from the coach, four of them altogether, and carried them to the brink of the slope down which I purposed to make our descent. I also conveyed thither a long coil of rawhide rope which I had previously discovered in the boot of the coach. I then hurried along the other road, which, as has been said before, lay at a somewhat lower level than the one we were on, and when I reached the shed I found the door had been opened, and the gentleman, with his tin pan, had scooped away a good deal of the snow about it, so as to admit of a moderately easy passage in and out. He met me outside, and grasped my hand.

"Sir, if you have a plan to propose," he said, "state it quickly. We are in a position of great danger. Those two ladies inside the shed cannot

much longer endure this exposure, and I presume that the ladies in your party — although their voices, which I occasionally hear, do not seem to indicate it — must be in a like condition."

I replied that, so far, my companions had borne up very well, and without further waste of words proceeded to unfold my plan of escape.

When he had heard it the gentleman put on a very serious expression. "It seems hazardous," he said, "but it may be the only way out of our danger. Will you show me the point from which you took your observations?"

"Yes," said I, "but we must be in haste. The sun is getting up in the sky, and this crust may soon begin to melt. It is not yet really winter, you know."

We stepped quickly to the spot where I had carried the cushions. The gentleman stood and silently gazed, first at the blocked-up roadway, then at the long, smooth slope of the mountain-side directly beneath us, and then at the verdure of the plain below, which had grown greener under the increasing brightness of day. "Sir," said he, turning to me, "there is nothing to be done but to adopt your plan, or to remain here and die. We will accompany you in the descent, and I place myself under your orders."

"The first thing," said I, "is to bring here your carriage cushions, and help me to arrange them."

When he had brought the three cushions from the shed, the gentleman and I proceeded to place them with the others on the snow, so that the whole formed a sort of wide and nearly square mattress. Then, with a rawhide rope, we bound them together in a rough but secure net-work of cordage. In this part of the work I found my companion very apt and skillful.

When this rude mattress was completed, I requested the gentleman to bring his ladies to the place while I went for mine.

"What are we to pack up to take with us?" said Mrs. Aleshine, when I reached our coach.

"We take nothing at all," said I, "but the money in our pockets and our rugs and wraps. Everything else must be left in the coach, to be brought down to us when the roads shall be cleared out."

With our rugs and shawls on our arms we left the coach, and as we were crossing the other road we saw the gentleman and his companions approaching. These ladies were very much wrapped up, but one of them seemed to step along lightly and without difficulty, while the other moved slowly and was at times assisted by the gentleman.

A breeze had sprung up which filled the air with fine frozen particles blown from the uncrusted beds of snow along the edge of the forest, and I counseled Ruth to cover up her mouth and breathe as little of this snow powder as possible.

"If I 'm to go coastin' at all," said Mrs. Aleshine, "I 'd as lief do it with strangers as friends; and a little liefer, for that matter, if there 's any bones to be broken. But I must say that I 'd like to make the acquaintance of them ladies afore I git on to the sled, which," — at that moment catching sight of the mattress, — "you don't mean to say that that 's it?"

"Barb'ry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks from underneath her great woolen comforter, "if you want to get your lungs friz, you 'd better go on talkin'. Manners is manners, but they can wait till we get to the bottom of the hill."

Notwithstanding this admonition, I noticed that as soon as the two parties met, both Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine advanced and shook hands with the ladies who had been their neighbors under such peculiar circumstances, and that Mrs. Lecks herself expressed a muffled hope that they might all get down safely.

I now pushed the mattress which was to serve as our sled as close as was prudent to the edge of

the descent, and requested the party to seat themselves upon it. Without hesitation Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine sat down, taking Ruth between them, as they had promised to do. My young wife was very nervous, but the cool demeanor of her companions, and my evident belief in the practicability of the plan, gave her courage, and she quietly took her seat. The younger of the two strange ladies stepped lightly on the cushions, and before seating herself stood up for a good look at the far-extending bed of snow over which we were to take our way. The prospect did not appear to deter her, and she sat down promptly and with an air that seemed to say that she anticipated a certain enjoyment from the adventure. The elder lady, however, exhibited very different emotions. She shrank back from the cushions towards which the gentleman was conducting her, and turned her face away from the declivity. Her companion assured her that it was absolutely necessary that we should descend from the mountain in this way, for there was no other; and asserting his belief that our slide would be a perfectly safe one, he gently drew her to the mattress and induced her to sit down.

I now, for the first time, noticed that the gentleman carried under one arm, and covered by his

long cloak, a large package of some sort, and I immediately said to him: "It will be very imprudent for us to attempt to carry any of our property except what we can put in our pockets or wrap around us. Everything else should be left here, either in your carriage or our coach, and I have no fear that anything will be lost. But even if our luggage were in danger of being molested we cannot afford to consider it under circumstances such as these."

"My dear sir," said the gentleman, speaking very gravely, "I appreciate the hazards of our position as keenly as yourself. Our valises, and all the light luggage which we had with us in our carriage, I have left there, and shall not give them another thought. But with the parcel I hold under this arm I cannot part, and if I go down the mountain-side on these cushions, it must go with me. If you refuse in such a case to allow me to be one of your party, I must remain behind, and endeavor to find a board or something on which I can make the descent of the mountain."

He spoke courteously, but with an air of decision which showed me that it would be of no use to argue with him. Besides, there was no time for parleying; and if this gentleman chose to

take his chances with but one arm at liberty, it was no longer my affair. I therefore desired him to sit down, and I arranged the company so that they sat back to back, their feet drawn up to the edge of the mattress. I then took the place which had been reserved for me as steersman, and having tied several shawls together, end to end, I passed them around the whole of us under our arms, thus binding us all firmly together. I felt that one of our greatest dangers would be that one or more of the party might slip from the mattress during the descent.

When all was ready I asked the gentleman, who, with the elder lady, sat near me, at the back of the mattress, to assist in giving us a start by pushing outward with his heels while I thrust the handle of my wooden shovel into the crust and thus pushed the mattress forward. The starting was a little difficult, but in a minute or two we had pushed the mattress partly over the brink, and then, after a few more efforts, we began to slide downward.

The motion, at first slow, suddenly became quite rapid, and I heard behind me a cry or exclamation, from whom I knew not, but I felt quite sure it did not come from any of our party. I hoped to be able to make some use of my shovel in the

guidance of our unwieldy raft or mattress-sled, but I soon found this impossible, and down we went over the smooth, hard-frozen slope, with nothing to direct our course but the varying undulations of the mountain-side. Every moment we seemed to go faster and faster, and soon we began to revolve, so that sometimes I was in front and sometimes behind. Once, when passing over a very smooth sheet of snow, we fairly spun around, so that in every direction feet were flying out from a common center and heels grating on the frozen crust. But there were no more cries or exclamations. Each one of us grasped the cordage which held the cushions together, and the rapidity of the motion forced us almost to hold our breath.

Down the smooth, white slope we sped as a bird skims through the air. It seemed to me as if we passed over miles and miles of snow. Sometimes my face was turned down the mountain where the snow surface seemed to stretch out illimitably, and then it was turned upward towards the apparently illimitable slopes over which we had passed.

Presently, my position now being in front of the little group that glanced along its glittering way, I saw at some distance below me a long rise

or terrace which ran along the mountain-side for a considerable distance, and which cut off our view of everything below us. As we approached this hillock the descent became much more gradual and our progress slower, and at last I began to fear that our acquired velocity would not be sufficient to carry us up the side of this elevation, and so enable us to continue our descent. I therefore called to everybody in the rear to kick out vigorously, and with my shovel I endeavored to assist our progress. As we approached the summit of the elevation, we moved slower and slower. I became very anxious, for, should we slide backward, we might find it difficult or impossible to get ourselves and the mattress up this little hill. But the gentleman and myself worked valiantly, and as for Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, they kicked their heels through the frozen crust with such energy that we moved sidewise almost as much as upward. But in a moment the anxious suspense was over, and we rested on the ridge of the long hillock with the mountain-side stretching down to the plain, which lay not very far below us.

I should have been glad to remain here a few minutes to regain breath, and to give some consideration to the rest of our descent, but some of

those behind continued to push — the mattress slid over the edge of the terrace, and down again we went. Our progress now was not so rapid, but it was very much more unpleasant. The snow was thinner; there was little or no crust upon it, and we very soon reached a wide extent of exposed turf over which we slid, but not without a good deal of bumping against stones and protuberances. Then there was another sheet of snow, which quickened our downward impetus; and, after that, the snow was seen only in occasional patches, and our progress continued over a long slope of short, partly dried grass, which was very slippery, and over which we passed with considerable quickness.

I wished now to bring our uncouth sled to a stop, and to endeavor to make the rest of the descent on foot. But although I stuck out my heels and tried to thrust the handle of my shovel into the ground, it was of no use. On we went, and the inequalities of the surface gave an irregularity of motion which was uncomfortable and alarming. We turned to this side and that, we bounced and bumped, and the rawhide ropes, which must have been greatly frayed and cut by the snow crust, now gave way in several places, and I knew that the mattress would soon separate

into its original cushions, if indeed they still could be called cushions. Fearing increased danger should we now continue bound together in a bunch, I jerked apart the shawl-knot under my arms, and the next moment, it seemed to me, there was a general dissolution of our connection with each other. Fortunately, we were now near the bottom of the slope, for while some of us stuck fast to the cushions, others rolled over, or slid, independent of any protection; while I, being thrown forward on my feet, actually ran downhill! I had just succeeded in stopping myself, when down upon me came the rest of the company, all prostrate in some position or other.

And now from an unwieldy mass of shawls came a cry:

"O Albert Dusante! Where are you? Lucille! Lucille!"

Instantly sprang to one foot good Mrs. Aleshine, her other foot being entangled in a mass of shawls which dragged behind her. Her bonnet was split open and mashed down over her eyes. In her left hand she waved a piece of yellow flannel, which in her last mad descent she had torn from some part of the person of Mrs. Lecks, and in the other a bunch of stout dead weeds, which she had seized and pulled up by the roots as she had

passed them. Her dress was ripped open down her rotund back, and the earth from the weed roots had bespattered her face. From the midst of this dilapidation her round eyes sparkled with excitement. Hopping on one foot, the shawls and a part of a cushion dragging behind her, she shouted:

"The Dusantes! They are the Dusantes!"

Then pitching forward on her knees before the two strange ladies, who had now tumbled into each other's arms, she cried:

"Oh, which is Emily, and which is Lucille?"

I had rushed towards Ruth, who had clung to a cushion, and was now sitting upon it, when Mrs. Lecks, who was close beside her, arose to her feet and stood upright. One foot was thrust through her own bonnet, and her clothes gave evidence of the frenzy and power of Mrs. Aleshine's grasp, but her mien was dignified and her aspect stately.

"Barb'ry Aleshine!" she exclaimed, "if them Dusantes has dropped down from heaven at your very feet, can't you give 'em a minute to feel their ribs and see if their legs and arms is broken?"

The younger lady now turned her head towards Mrs. Aleshine. "I am Lucille," she said.

In a moment the good woman's arms were around her neck. "I always liked you the best of

the two," she whispered into the ear of the astonished young lady.

Having found that Ruth was unhurt, I ran to the assistance of the others. The gentleman had just arisen from a cushion, upon which, lying flat on his back, he had slid over the grass, still holding under one arm the package from which he had refused to part. I helped him to raise the elder lady to her feet. She had been a good deal shaken, and much frightened, but although a little bruised, she had received no important injury.

I went to fill a leather pocket-cup from a brook near by, and when I returned I found the gentleman standing, confronted by Mrs. Lecks, Mrs. Aleshine, and Ruth, while his own companions were regarding the group with eager interest.

"Yes," he was saying, "my name is Dusante, but why do you ask at this moment? Why do you show such excited concern on the subject?"

"Why?" exclaimed Mrs. Lecks. "I will tell you why, sir. My name is Mrs. Lecks, and this is Mrs. Aleshine, and if you are the Mr. Dusante with the house on the desert island, this is the Mrs. Craig who was married in that very house, and the gentleman here with the water is Mr. Craig, who wrote you the letter, which I hope you got. And if that is n't reason enough for our

wanting to know if you are Mr. Dusante, I'd like to be told what more there could be!"

"It's them! Of course it's them!" cried Mrs. Aleshine. "I had a feelin' while we were scootin' down-hill that they was near and dear to us, though exactly why and how, I did n't know. And she's told me she's Lucille, and of course the other must be Emily, though what relations ——"

"Am I to understand," interrupted the gentleman, looking with earnest animation from one to the other of us, "that these are the good people who inhabited my house on the island?"

"The very ones!" cried Mrs. Aleshine. "And what relation are you to Emily? and Lucille to her?"

The gentleman stepped backward and laid down the package which he had held under his arm, and advancing towards me with outstretched hands, and with tears starting to his eyes, he exclaimed:

"And this man then, to whom I owe so much, is Mr. Craig!"

"Owe me!" I said. "It is to you that we owe our very lives, and our escape from death in mid-ocean."

"Do not speak of it," he said, shaking his head with a sorrowful expression on his face. "You owe me nothing. I would to Heaven it were not

so! But we will not talk of that, now. And this is Mrs. Craig," he continued, taking Ruth by the hand,—"the fair lady whose nuptials were celebrated in my house. And Mrs. Lecks, and Mrs. Aleshine." As he spoke he shook hands with each. "How I have longed to meet you! I have thought of you every day since I returned to my island, and discovered that you had been—I wish I could say—my guests. And where is the reverend gentleman? And the three mariners? I hope that nothing has befallen them!"

"Alas!—for three of them at least," ejaculated Mrs. Aleshine; "they have left us, but they are all right. And now, sir, if you could tell us what relation you are to Emily, and what Lucille ——"

"Barb'ry!" cried Mrs. Lecks, making a dash towards her friend, "can't you give the man a minute to breathe? Don't you see he 's so dumflustered that he hardly knows who he is himself! If them two women was to sink down dead with hunger and hard slidin' right afore your very eyes while you was askin' what relation they was to each other and to him, it would no more 'n serve you right! We'd better be seein' if anythin' 's the matter with 'em, and what we can do for 'em."

At this moment the younger of Mr. Dusante's ladies quickly stepped forward. "O Mrs. Craig,

Mrs. Lecks, and Mrs. Aleshine!" she exclaimed, "I 'm just dying to know all about you!"

"And which, contrariwise," cried Mrs. Aleshine, "is the same with us, exactly."

"And of all places in the world," continued the young lady, "that we should meet here!"

No one could have been more desirous than I was to know all about these Dusantes, and to discuss the strange manner of our meeting, but I saw that Ruth was looking very pale and faint, and that the elder Dusante lady had sat down again upon the ground, as though obliged to do so by sheer exhaustion, and I therefore hailed with a double delight the interruption of further explanations by the appearance of two men on horseback who came galloping towards us.

They belonged to the house which I had noticed from the road above, and one of them had seen our swift descent down the mountain-side. At first he had thought the black object he saw sliding over the snow slopes was a rock or mass of underbrush, but his keen eye soon told him that it was a group of human beings, and summoning a companion, he had set out for the foot of the mountain as soon as horses could be caught and saddled.

The men were much surprised when they heard the details of our adventure, but as it was quite

plain that some members of our party needed immediate nourishment and attention, the questions and explanations were made very short. The men dismounted from their horses, and the elder Dusante lady was placed upon one of them, one man leading the animal and the other supporting the lady. Ruth mounted the other horse, and I walked by her to assist her in keeping her seat, but she held fast to the high pommel of the saddle and got on very well. Mr. Dusante took his younger companion on one arm, and his package under the other, while Mrs. Lecks, having relieved her foot from the encircling bonnet, and Mrs. Aleshine, now free from the entangling shawls, followed in the rear. The men offered to come back with the horses for them if they would wait; but the two women declared that they were quite able to walk, and intended to do no waiting, and they trudged vigorously after us. The sun was now high, and the air down here was quite different from that of the mountain-side, being pleasant and almost warm. The men said that the snows above would probably soon melt, as it was much too early in the season for snow to lie long on these lower sides of the mountains.

Our way lay over an almost level plain for about

a mile. A portion of it was somewhat rough, so that when we reached the low house to which we were bound, we were all very glad indeed to get there. The house belonged to the two men, who owned a small ranch here. One of them was married, and his wife immediately set herself to work to attend to our needs. Her home was small, its rooms few, and her larder very plain in quality; but everything she had was placed at our disposal. Her own bed was given to the elder Dusante lady, who took immediate possession of it; and after a quickly prepared but plentiful meal of fried pork, corn-bread, and coffee, the rest of us stretched ourselves out to rest wherever we could find a place. Before lying down, however, I had, at Ruth's earnest solicitation, engaged one of the men to ride to the railroad station to inquire about Mr. Enderton, and to inform him of our safety. By taking a route which ran parallel with the mountain chain, but at some distance from it, the station, the man said, could be reached without encountering snow.

None of us had had proper rest during the past two nights, and we slept soundly until dark, when we were aroused to partake of supper. All of us, except the elder Dusante lady, who preferred to remain in bed, gathered around the table. After

supper a large fire, principally of brush-wood, was built upon the hearth; and with the bright blaze, two candles, and a lamp, the low room appeared light and cheery. We drew up about the fire — for the night was cool — on whatever chairs, stools, or boxes we could find, and no sooner had we all seated ourselves than Mrs. Aleshine exclaimed:

"Now, Mr. Dusante, it ain't in the power of mortal man, nor woman neither,— an' if put the other way it might be stronger,— to wait any longer before knowin' what relation Lucille is to Emily, and you to them, an' all about that house of yours on the island. If I 'd blown up into bits this day through holdin' in my wantin' to know, I should n't have wondered! An' if it had n't been for hard sleep, I don't believe I could have held in nohow!"

"That 's my mind exactly," said Mrs. Lecks; "and though I know there 's a time for all things, and don't believe in crowdin' questions on played-out people, I do think, Mr. Dusante, that if I could have caught up with you when we was comin' over here, I 'd have asked you to speak out on these p'ints. But you 're a long-legged walker, which Mrs. Aleshine is not, and it would n't have done to leave her behind."

"Which she would n't 'a' been," said Mrs. Aleshine, "long legs or short."

Ruth and I added our entreaties that Mr. Dusante should tell his story, and the good ranchman and his wife said that if there was anything to be done in the story-telling line they were in for it, strong; and quitting their work of clearing away supper things, they brought an old hair trunk from another room and sat down just behind Mrs. Lecks.

The younger Dusante lady, who, having been divested of her wraps, her veil, and the woolen shawl that had been tied over her head, had proved to be a very pretty girl with black eyes, here declared that it had been her intention at the first opportunity to get us to tell our story, but as we had asked first, she supposed we ought to be satisfied first.

"I do not wish, my good friends," said Mr. Dusante, "to delay for a moment longer than necessary your very pardonable curiosity concerning me and my family; and I must say at the same time that, although your letter, sir, gave me a very clear account of your visit to my island, there are many things which naturally could not be contained within the limits of a letter, and about which I am most anxious to

make inquiries. But these I will reserve until my own narration is finished.

"My name is Albert Dusante. It may interest you to know that my father was a Frenchman and my mother an American lady from New England. I was born in France, but have lived very little in that country, and for a great part of my life have been a merchant in Honolulu. For the past few years, however, I have been enabled to free myself in a great degree from the trammels of business, and to devote myself to the pursuits of a man of leisure. I have never married, and this young lady is my sister."

"Then what relation," began Mrs. Aleshine, "is she to ——?"

At this moment the hand of Mrs. Lecks, falling heavily into the lap of the speaker, stopped this question, and Mr. Dusante proceeded:

"Our parents died when Lucille was an infant, and we have no near blood relations."

At this, the faces of both Mrs. Aleshine and Mrs. Lecks assumed expressions as if they had each just received a letter superscribed in an unknown hand, and were wondering who it could possibly be from.

"The lady who is now resting in the adjoining room," continued Mr. Dusante, "is a dear friend who has been adopted by me as a mother."

"Upon my word!" burst from Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, in as much unison of time and tone as if the words had been a response in a church service, while Miss Lucille leaned back against the wall near which she sat, and laughed gleefully. Mr. Dusante, however, continued his statements with the same quiet gravity with which he had begun.

"This lady was a dear friend of my mother, although younger than she. I adopted her as a mother to my little orphan sister, and, consequently, placed her in the same maternal relation to myself, doing this with much earnest satisfaction, for I hoped to be able to return, as a son, something of the tender care and affection which she would bestow on Lucille as a daughter."

"And she is Emily?" cried Mrs. Aleshine.

"She adopted our name," answered the speaker, "and she is Mrs. Emily Dusante."

"And she is your adopted *mother?*" said Mrs. Aleshine.

"Adopted mother!" ejaculated Mrs. Lecks.

"Yes," answered Mr. Dusante.

"And that is the only relation she is to you two?" said Mrs. Lecks.

"And you to her?" added Mrs. Aleshine.

"Most assuredly," answered Mr. Dusante.

Here Mrs. Lecks leaned back in her chair, folded her hands in her lap, and ejaculated: "Well, well!" and then allowed her face to assume a rigid intention of having nothing more to say at the present moment.

"One thing is certain," remarked Mrs. Aleshine, in a tone which indicated that she did not care who heard her, "I always liked Lucille the best!"

At this Ruth and I exchanged smiles with Miss Lucille, and Mr. Dusante proceeded:

"I do not wish to occupy too much of your time with our personal affairs, and will therefore state that the island on which you found refuge, and where I wish, most heartily, I had been present to act as host, was bought by me as a retreat from the annoyances of business and the exactions of society. I built there a good house ——"

"Which it truly was," said Mrs. Aleshine, "with fixtures in it for water, and letting it off, which I never saw in a house so far out of town."

"I furnished it suitably," said Mr. Dusante. "We had books and music, and for several years we passed vacations there which were both enjoyable and profitable. But of late my sister has found the place lonely, and we have traveled a good deal, making intermittent and often short visits to the island.

"As I never cared to leave any one on that lonely spot during our absences from it, I arranged a gateway of bars across the only opening in the reef, with the intention of preventing marauding visits from fishing-boats or other small craft which might be passing that way. As the island was out of the ordinary track of vessels, I did not imagine that my bars would ever prove an obstacle to unfortunate castaways who might seek a refuge there."

"Which they did n't," remarked Mrs. Aleshine, "for under we bobbed."

"I never exactly understood," said Mr. Dusante, "and I hope to have it explained to me in due time, how you passed my bars without removing them, and I have had a sore weight upon my conscience since I discovered that shipwrecked persons, fleeing to my house from the perils of the sea, should have found those inhospitable bars in their way ——"

"Which is a weight you might as well cast off and be done with it," said Mrs. Lecks, her deep-set notions on the rights of property obliging her to speak; "for if a man has n't a right to lock up his house when he goes away and leaves it, I don't know what rights anybody has about anything. Me, or Mrs. Aleshine, or anybody else here who

has a house, might just as well go off travelin' or to town visitin' and leave our front door unlocked and the yard gate swingin' on its hinges, because we was afraid that some tramp or other body with no house or home might come along and not be able to get in and make himself comfortable. Your business, sir, when you left that house and all your belongin's on that island, was to leave everything tight and safe, and the business of people sailin' in ships was to go on their proper way and not be runnin' into each other. And if these last mentioned did n't see fit to do that and so got into trouble, they should have gone to some island where there were people to attend to 'em, just as the tramps should go to the poor-house. And this is what we would have done — not meanin' the poor-house — if we had n't been so over long-headed as to get into a leaky boat, which, I wish it understood, is sayin' nothin' against Mr. Craig."

"That 's true," said Mrs. Aleshine, "for nobody has got a right to complain that a fellow-bein' locks his own door after him. But it does seem to me, sir, that in such scattered neighborhoods as your island is in, it might be a good thing to leave something to eat and drink — perhaps in a bottle or in a tin pail — at the outside of your

bars for them as might come along shipwrecked and not be able to get inside on account of bein' obliged to come in a boat, an' not as we did; an' so when they found they'd have to go on, they might have somethin' to keep up their strength till they got to another house."

"Now, Barb'ry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks, "when you start off on a journey to Japan or any other place an' leave mince-pies and buttered toast a-stickin' on the p'ints of your palin's for tramps that might come along and need 'em, you can do that kind of talkin'. But as that time has n't come, let 's hear the rest of Mr. Dusante's story."

"When I first visited my island this year," continued the narrator, "we made but a short stay, as we were all desirous of taking a somewhat extended sea voyage in my steam yacht. We visited several places of interest, and when we returned, just six weeks ago to-day ——"

"Just one week, lackin' a day," exclaimed Mrs. Lecks, "after we left that spot!"

"If I 'd 'a' knowed," said Mrs. Aleshine, rising to her feet, "that you 'd be back so soon, I 'd 'a' made them sailor men live on fish, I 'd 'a' eat garden truck myself, and I 'd be bound I 'd 'a' made the flour hold out for six days more for the

rest of 'em, if I 'd 'a' had to work my fingers to the skin and bone to do it!" Then she sat down solemnly.

"When we returned," continued Mr. Dusante, "I was pleased to find my bars intact; and when these were unlocked, and the boat from our yacht went through with ourselves and our servants, it was very agreeable to notice the good order which seemed to prevail everywhere. As we passed from the wharf to the house, not even fallen boughs or weeds were seen to indicate that we had been away from the place for more than two months. When we entered the house, my mother and sister immediately ascended to their chambers, and when the windows had been opened I heard them from above calling to each other and remarking upon the freshness and cleanliness of the rooms. I went to my library, and when I had thrown open the window I was struck with the somewhat peculiar air of order which seemed to obtain in the room. The books stood upon their shelves with a remarkable regularity, and the chairs and other furniture were arranged with a precision which impressed me as unusual. In a moment, sir, I saw your letter upon the table addressed to me. Greatly astonished, I opened and read it.

"When I had finished it, my amazement was

great indeed; but obeying an instant impulse, I stepped into the dining-room which a servant had opened, and took the ginger-jar from the mantelpiece. When I lifted from it the little brown-paper parcel, and beneath it saw the money which had been mentioned in the letter, you may imagine the condition of my mind. I did not take out the money, nor count it; but covering it again with the paper parcel, which I believe contained fish-hooks, and with the jar in my hands, I returned to the library, where I sat down to ponder upon these most astounding revelations. While so doing, my mother and sister hastily entered the room. Lucille declared in an excited manner that she believed that the brownies or some other fairies had been there while we were away and had kept the house in order. The whole place was actually cleaner, she said, than when we left it. She had taken down a thin dress from her closet, and it positively looked as if it had just come from the hand of a laundress, with the ruffles ironed smoother and more evenly than they had ever been since it was first stitched together. 'Albert,' said my mother, her face pale, 'there has been somebody in this house!' Then she went on to say that the windows, which were left unwashed because we went away in somewhat of a hurry,

were as bright and clean as if the maids had just been rubbing them; the floors and furniture were cleaner and freer from dust than they had ever been before; and the whole house looked as if we had just left it yesterday. 'In fact,' she said, 'it is unnaturally clean!'"

During this part of Mr. Dusante's story, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine sat very quiet, with an air of sedate humility upon their faces; but I could see by the proud light in their eyes that they felt their superiority to ordinary women, although they were properly resolved not to show such feeling.

"At that moment," continued Mr. Dusante, "a servant came hurrying into the room, and informed us that the flour was all gone, and that there was scarcely anything in the pantries to eat. At this my mother and my sister, who knew that an abundance of provisions had been left in the house, looked at each other aghast. But before they could express their consternation in words, I addressed them. 'My dear mother,' said I, 'and Lucille, there truly has been some one in this house. By this letter I am informed that for several weeks eight persons have lived here under this roof; a marriage has been solemnized, and the happy couple have gone forth from our doors. These

persons have eaten our food, they have made use of our property, and this has been their temporary home. But they are good people, honest and true-hearted, for they have left the house in better order than they found it, and more than the price of all they have consumed is in that ginger-jar.' And, thereupon, I read them your letter, sir.

"I cannot undertake to describe the wonder and absorbing interest with which this letter filled our minds. All needful stores were brought ashore from the yacht, which lay outside the reef, and we began our usual life on the island; but none of the occupations or recreations in which we formerly employed our time now possessed any attractions for us. Our minds were filled with thoughts of the persons who had been so strangely living in our house; and our conversation was mainly made up of surmises as to what sort of people they were, whether or not we should ever see them, and similar suppositions."

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Lucille, "I thought of you by day and by night, and pictured you all in various ways, but never as you really are. Sometimes I used to think that the boat in which you went away had been sunk in a storm in which you were all drowned, and that perhaps your ghosts would come back and live

in our house, and sleep in our beds, and clean our windows, and wash and iron our clothes, and do all sorts of things in the night."

"Goodnessful, gracious me!" cried Mrs. Aleshine, "don't talk that way! The idea of bein' a cold ghost, goin' about in the dark, is worse than slidin' down a snow mountain, even if you had to do it on the bare of your back."

"Barb'ry!" said Mrs. Lecks, severely.

"The idea is jus' as chillin'," replied her undaunted friend.

"Two things connected with this matter," continued Mr. Dusante, "weighed heavily on my mind. One of these I have already mentioned—the cruel inhospitality of the barred entrance."

I had refrained from adding to the interruptions to Mr. Dusante's narrative, but I now felt impelled to assure the gentleman, on behalf of myself and wife, that we shared the opinions of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, and felt that he could in no way be blamed for thus protecting his private property.

"You are very good," said Mr. Dusante, "but I will say here that there are now no bars to that entrance. I have left some people on the island, who will take care of my property and succor any unfortunate castaways who may arrive there.

The other matter to which I alluded was, however, the heavier load which oppressed me. This was the money in the ginger-jar. I could not endure to reflect that I had been paid actual money for the hospitality I would have been so glad to offer to you poor shipwrecked people. Every sentiment of my being rebelled against such a thing. I was grieved. I was ashamed. At last I determined I would bear no longer the ignominy of this brand of inhospitality, and that, with the ginger-jar in my hand, I would search over the world, if necessary, for the persons who in my absence had paid board to me, and return to them the jar with its contents uncounted and untouched. Your letter informed me of the island to which you were bound, and if I did not find you there I could discover to what port you had taken your departure. There I could make further inquiries, and so follow you. When I proposed this plan to my family they agreed to it instantly, for their interest in the matter was almost as great as mine; and in a day or two we started on our quest.

"I easily traced you to San Francisco, and found the hotel at which you had stopped. Here I obtained fresh news of you, and learned that you had started East, and that the destination of

the party was believed to be Philadelphia. I had hoped that I should meet with you before you left California; but supposing that by that time you had reached your destination, or were, at least, far on your way, I yielded to the solicitations of my sister and made some excursions in California, intending then to follow you to Philadelphia and there to advertise for Mr. Craig, if he could not otherwise be found. However, by the rarest and most fortunate of chances, we have met thus early, and for this I can never be too devoutly thankful."

"Nor we," said I earnestly; "for our greatly desired acquaintance with you and your family could not have begun too soon."

"Now," said Mr. Dusante, "I will perform the duty for which my journey was undertaken, and I assure you it is a great pleasure to me to be able, so soon, to carry out this cherished purpose."

He then took up from the floor by his side the package which he had so safely guarded during his swift and perilous descent of the mountain-side, and which he had since kept close by him. Placing this upon his knee, he removed the light shawl in which it had been rolled, and then several pieces of wrapping-paper, revealing to our eyes the familiar fat little ginger-jar which had stood on the mantel-piece of the dining-room in the

house on the island, and in which we had deposited our board-money.

"It would be simply impossible for me," said Mr. Dusante, "to consent to retain in my possession money paid for the aid which I involuntarily rendered to shipwrecked people. Had I been present on the island that aid would have been most heartily and freely given, and the fact of my absence makes no difference whatever in regard to my feelings on the subject of your paying for the food and shelter you found at my house. Having understood from Mr. Craig's letter that it was Mrs. Lecks who superintended the collection and depositing of the money, I now return to you, madam, this jar with its contents."

"And which," said Mrs. Lecks, sitting up very rigidly, with her hands clasped behind her, "I don't take. If it had been a day and a night, or even two nights and over a Sunday, it would n't have mattered; but when me and Mrs. Aleshine — and the rest of the party can speak for themselves — stays for weeks and weeks, without leave or license, in a man's house, we pay our board — of course, deductin' services. Good-night."

With that she arose, and walked very erect into the adjoining room.

"It was all very well, Mr. Dusante," said Mrs.

Aleshine, "for you to try to carry out what you thought was right, but we have our ideas as to what our duty is, and you have your ideas as to what your duty is, an' consciences is even."

And she followed her friend.

Mr. Dusante looked surprised and troubled, and he turned towards me. "My dear sir," said I, "those two good women are very sensitive in regard to right and justice, and I think it will be well not to press this subject upon them. As for my wife and I, neither of us would consent to touch money which was placed in that jar by Mrs. Lecks with the expectation that no one but you or one of your family would take it out."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Dusante, replacing the wrapping-paper around the jar; "I will drop the subject for the present. But you will allow me to say, sir, that I also am very sensitive in regard to right and justice."

Early the next morning the man who had been sent to the railroad station came back bringing news that a four-horse wagon would shortly be sent for us, and also bearing a letter from Mr. Enderton to Ruth. In this that gentleman informed his daughter that he was quite well, but that he had suffered anxiety on account of her probable hardships in the abandoned stage-coach.

He had hoped, however, that the snow which had precluded his return with assistance had fallen lightly in the elevated position in which she had been left; and he had trusted also that Mr. Craig had bethought himself to build a fire somewhere near the coach, where his daughter might be warmed; and that the provisions, of which he knew an ample quantity had been packed for the trip, had been properly heated for her and given to her at suitable intervals. This anxiety, he said, had added very much to his own mental disquietude occasioned by the violent vituperations and unjust demands of the driver of the stage-coach, who had seen fit to attack him with all manner of abuse, and might even have resorted to personal violence had it not been for the interference of by-standers and the locking of his room-door. He was now, however, much relieved by the departure of this driver, and by the news that his daughter had reached a place of safety, which, of course, he had supposed she would do, her detention having occurred on an ordinary route of travel.

While waiting for the arrival of the wagon, the adventures of Mrs. Lecks, Mrs. Aleshine, and myself, as well as those of Ruth and her father, from the time the one party left America and the other

China, were related at length to the Dusantes, who showed a deep interest in every detail and asked many questions.

Mrs. Dusante, whose nervous equilibrium had been fully restored by her night's rest, and who, although feeling a little stiff and bruised, now declared herself quite well, proved to be a very pleasant lady of fifty-five or thereabouts. She was of a quiet disposition, but her speech and manner showed that in former years, at least, she had been a woman of society, and I soon found out that she was much interested in the study of character. This interest was principally shown in the direction of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, whom she evidently looked upon as most remarkable women. If any of her sentiments were those of admiration, however, they were not returned in kind: Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine had but a small opinion of her.

"There 's mother-in-laws, and step-mothers, and real mothers, and grandmothers, and sometimes great-grandmothers livin'," said Mrs. Lecks to me apart; "but though Mr. Dusante may be a well-meanin' man — and I don't doubt he is — and wishin', I have n't the least reason to disbelieve, to do his whole duty by his fellow-men, still, I must say, bein' brought up as

I was, he has n't any right to make a new kind of mother. To be sure, a man can adopt children, but that is n't goin' backward like this is, which is agen nat'ral law, and gospel."

"I expect," said Mrs. Aleshine, who was with us, "that them French has got fashions that we don't know about, and thankful we ought to be that we don't! I never had no patience with French heels an' French arsenic-green beans, an' now if there 's to be adoptin' of mothers in this country, the next thing will be gullotynes."

"I don't see," said I, "why you look upon the Dusantes as French people. They are just as much American as French."

"Well," said Mrs. Lecks, "it 's not for me and Mrs. Aleshine to set ourselves up to judge other people. In our part of the country we don't adopt mothers, but if they do it in France, or the Sandwich Islands, or down East, I don't know that we ought to have anythin' to say."

"He might as well have adopted a father at the same time," said Mrs. Aleshine, "although, to be sure, he would 'a' had to been particular to take one that was acquainted with Mrs. Dusante, and not had 'em strangers to each other, though parents to him."

"If I was you, Barb'ry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks, "I 'd adopt some sort of rag to the top of my head to serve for a bonnet, for here comes the wagon, and I suppose now we 'll be off."

We took leave of the kind-hearted ranch people, who looked upon us as a godsend into their lonely life, and disposed ourselves as comfortably as we could in the large wagon. Our journey of seven or eight miles to the railroad station was slow, and over ways that were rough. Mrs. Dusante was a delicate woman and not used to hardship, whereas Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine were exceedingly vigorous and tough. The consequence of this difference was that the kindly hearts of the latter prompted them to do everything they could to prevent Mrs. Dusante feeling the bumps and jolts, and to give her such advantages of wraps and position as would help her to bear better the fatigues of the journey.

In doing this these good women gradually forgot the adopted mother and came to think only of the very pleasant lady who needed their attentions, and who took such a lively and agreeable interest in their family histories, their homes, their manner of living, and everything that pertained to them; and before we reached the end of our trip, these three were talking together like old friends. Ruth

and Miss Lucille had also struck up a warm acquaintance, while I found Mr. Dusante a very entertaining man,— of sedate and careful speech, ingenious ideas, and of a very courteous disposition.

When we arrived at the railroad station we were met by Mr. Enderton, who showed a moderate degree of pleasure at seeing us and an immoderate amount of annoyance, exhibited principally to me, in being obliged to give up to the women of our party the large room he had occupied in the only lodging-house in the little settlement.

When I informed him that the strangers with us were the Dusantes, on whose island we had been staying, he at first listened vaguely. He had always looked upon the Dusante family as a sort of fable used by Mrs. Lecks to countenance her exactions of money from the unfortunate sojourners on the island. But when I told him what Mr. Dusante had done, and related how he had brought the board-money with him, and had offered to pay it back to us, an eager interest was aroused in him.

"I do not wonder," he exclaimed, "that the conscience-stricken man wishes to give the money back, but that any one should refuse what actually belongs to him or her is beyond my comprehen-

sion! One thing is certain—I shall receive my portion. Fifteen dollars a week for my daughter and myself that woman charged me, and I will have it back."

"My dear sir," I said, "your board was reduced to the same sum as that paid by the rest of us,—four dollars a week each."

"I call to mind no reduction," said Mr. Enderton. "I remember distinctly the exorbitant sum charged me for board on a desert island. It made a deep impression upon me."

"I do not care to talk any further on this subject," I said. "You must settle it with Mrs. Lecks."

Mr. Enderton gave a great sniff, and walked away with dignity. I could not but laugh as I imagined his condition two minutes after he had stated his opinions on this subject to Mrs. Lecks.

When Mr. Dusante had started from San Francisco on his search for us, he had sent his heavy baggage ahead of him to Ogden City, where he purposed to make his first stop. He supposed that we might possibly here diverge from our homeward-bound route in order to visit the Mormon metropolis; and, if we had done so, he did not wish to pass us. It was therefore now agreed that we should all go to Ogden City, and there

await the arrival of our effects left in the snowed-up vehicles on the mountain-side. We made arrangements with the station-master that these should be forwarded to us as soon as the stage-coach and the carriage could be brought down. All the baggage of my party was on the coach, and it consisted only of a few valises bought in San Francisco, and a package containing two life-preservers, which Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine said they would take home with them, if they took nothing else.

On the morning after our arrival at Ogden City, Mr. Dusante took me aside. "Sir," he said, "I wish to confide to you my intentions regarding the jar containing the money left by your party in my house, and I trust you will do nothing to thwart them. When your baggage arrives, you, with your party, will doubtless continue your eastern way, and we shall return to San Francisco. But the jar, with its contents, shall be left behind to be delivered to Mrs. Lecks. If you will take charge of the jar and hand it to her, sir, I shall be obliged greatly."

I promised Mr. Dusante that I would not interfere with his intentions, but asserted that I could, on no account, take charge of the jar. The possession of that piece of pottery, with its contents,

was now a matter of dispute between him and Mrs. Lecks, and must be settled by them.

"Very well, then, sir," he said. "I shall arrange to depart before you and your company, and I shall leave the jar, suitably packed, in the care of the clerk of this hotel, with directions to hand it to Mrs. Lecks after I am gone. Thus there will be nothing for her to do but to receive it."

Some one now came into the smoking-room, where we were sitting, and no more was said, on this subject. Mr. Dusante's statement of his intention very much amused me, for Mrs. Lecks had previously taken me into her confidence in regard to her intentions in this matter. "Mr. Dusante," she had said, "has n't dropped a word more about the money in that ginger-jar, but I know just as well as he does what he is goin' to do about it. When the time comes to go, he 's goin' to slip off quietly, leavin' that jar behind him, thinkin' then I 'll be obliged to take it, there bein' nobody to give it back to. But he 'll find me just as sharp as he is. I 've got the street and number of his business place in Honolulu from his sister,— askin' about it in an off-hand way, as if it did n't mean anything,— an' if that jar is left for me, I 'll pack it in a box, money and all, and

I 'll express it to Mr. Dusante; and when he gets to Honolulu he 'll find it there, and then he 'll know that two can play at that sort of game."

Knowing Mr. Dusante, and knowing Mrs. Lecks, I pictured to myself a box containing a ginger-jar, and covered with numerous half-obliterated addresses, traveling backward and forward between the Sandwich Islands and Pennsylvania during the lifetime of the contestants, and, probably, if testamentary desire should be regarded, during a great part of the lifetime of their heirs. That the wear and tear of the box might make it necessary to inclose it in a keg, and that, eventually, the keg might have to be placed in a barrel, and that, after a time, in a hogshead, seemed to me as likely as any other contingencies which might befall this peregrinating ginger-jar.

We spent three days in Ogden City, and then, the weather having moderated very much, and the snow on the mountains having melted sufficiently to allow the vehicles to be brought down, our effects were forwarded to us, and my party and that of Mr. Dusante prepared to proceed on our different ways. An eastward-bound train left that evening an hour after we received our baggage, but we did not care to depart upon such

short notice, and so determined to remain until the next day.

In the evening Mr. Dusante came to me to say that he was very glad to find that the westward train would leave Ogden City early in the morning, so that he and his family would start on their journey some hours before we should leave. "This suits my plans exactly," he said. "I have left the ginger-jar, securely wrapped, and addressed to Mrs. Lecks, with the clerk of the hotel, who will deliver it to-morrow immediately after my departure. All our preparations are made, and we purpose this evening to bid farewell to you and our other kind friends, from whom, I assure you, we are most deeply grieved to part."

I had just replied that we also regretted extremely the necessity for this separation, when a boy brought me a letter. I opened it, and found it was from Mr. Enderton. It read as follows:

DEAR SIR: I have determined not to wait here until to-morrow, but to proceed eastward by this evening's train. I desire to spend a day in Chicago, and as you and the others will probably not wish to stop there, I shall, by this means, attain my object without detaining you. My sudden resolution will not give me time to see you all before I start, but I have taken a hurried leave of my daughter, and this letter will explain my departure to the rest.

I will also mention that I have thought it proper, as the natural head of our party, both by age and position, to settle the amicable dispute in regard to the reception and disposition of the money paid, under an excusable misapprehension, for our board and lodging upon a desert island. I discovered that the receptacle of this money had been left in the custody of the clerk, addressed to Mrs. Lecks, who has not only already refused to receive it, and would probably do so again, but who is, in my opinion, in no wise entitled to hold, possess, or dispose of it. I, therefore, without making any disturbance whatever, have taken charge of the package, and shall convey it with me to Chicago. When you arrive there, I will apportion the contents among us according to our several claims. This I regard as a very sensible and prudent solution of the little difficulty which has confronted us in regard to the disposition of this money. Yours hurriedly,

DAVID J. ENDERTON.

P. S. I shall stop at Brandiger's Hotel, where I shall await you.

PART III

MR. ENDERTON'S letter astonished and angered me, but, in spite of my indignation, I could not help smiling at the unexpected way in which he had put a stop to the probable perpetual peregrinations of the ginger-jar. I handed the letter to Mr. Dusante, and when he had read it his face flushed, and I could see that he was very angry, although he kept his temper under excellent control.

"Sir," he said presently, "this shall not be allowed. That jar, with its contents, is my property until Mrs. Lecks has consented to receive it. It is of my own option that I return it at all, and I have decided to return it to Mrs. Lecks. Any one interfering with my intentions steps entirely beyond the line of just and warrantable procedure. Sir, I shall not go westward to-morrow morning, but, with my family, will accompany you to Chicago, where I shall require Mr. Ender-

ton to return to me my property, which I shall then dispose of as I see fit. You must excuse me, sir, if anything I have said regarding this gentleman with whom you are connected has wounded your sensibilities."

"Oh, don't think of that!" I exclaimed. "Pitch into Enderton as much as you please, and you may be sure that I shall not object. When I took the daughter to wife, I did not marry the father. But, of course, for my wife's sake I hope this matter will not be made the subject of public comment."

"You need have no fear of that," said Mr. Dusante; "and you will allow me to remark that Mr. Enderton's wife must have been a most charming lady."

"Why do you think so?" I asked.

"I judge so," he answered, with a bow, "from my acquaintance with Mrs. Craig."

I now went immediately to Ruth, who, I found, knew nothing of what had occurred, except that her father had gone on to Chicago in advance of our party, and had had time only to bid her a hasty good-bye. I made no remarks on this haste which would not allow Mr. Enderton to take leave of us, but which gave him time to write a letter of some length; and as Ruth knew nothing of this letter, I determined not to mention it to her.

Her father's sudden departure surprised her but little, for she told me that he always liked to get to places before the rest of the party with whom he might be journeying. "Even when we go to church," she said, "he always walks ahead of the rest of us. I don't understand why he likes to do so, but this is one of his habits."

When I informed Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine of what had happened, they fairly blazed.

"I don't know what Mr. Dusante calls it," exclaimed Mrs. Lecks, "but I know what I call it!"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Mrs. Aleshine, her round eyes sparkling with excitement; "if that is n't exhonesty, then he ain't no ex-missionary! I pity the heathen he converted!"

"I'll convert him," said Mrs. Lecks, "if ever I lay eyes on him! Walkin' away with a package with my name on it! He might as well take my gold spectacles or my tortoise-shell comb! I suppose there 's no such thing as ketchin' up with him, but I 'll telegraph after him; an' I 'll let him know that if he dares to open a package of mine, I'll put the law on him!"

"That 's so," said Mrs. Aleshine. "You kin send telegraphs all along the line to one station an' another for conductors to give to him in the cars, an' directed to Mr. Enderton, a tall man with

gray-mixed hair an' a stolen bundle. That 's the way they did in our place when Abram Marly's wife fell into the cistern, an' he 'd jus' took the cars to the city, an' they telegraphed to him at five different stations to know where he 'd left the ladder."

"Which ain't a bad idea," said Mrs. Lecks, "though his name will be enough on it without no description; an' I 'll do that this minute, an' find out about the stations from the clerk."

"You must be very careful," I said, "about anything of that kind, for the telegrams will be read at the stations, and Mr. Enderton might be brought into trouble in a way which we all should regret; but a dispatch may be worded so that he, and no one else, would understand it."

"Very well," said Mrs. Lecks, "an' let 's get at it; but I must say that he don't deserve bein' saved no trouble, for I 'm as sure as that I 'm a livin' woman that he never saved nobody else no trouble sence the first minute he was born."

The following dispatch was concocted and sent on to Bridger, to be delivered to Mr. Enderton on the train:

The package you know of has been stolen. You will recognize the thief. If he leaves it at Chicago hotel, let him go. If he opens it, clap him in jail.

MRS. LECKS.

"I think that will make him keep his fingers off it," said Mrs. Lecks; "an' if Mr. Dusante chooses to send somethin' of the same kind to some other station, it won't do no harm. An' if that Enderton gets so skeered that he keeps out of sight and hearin' of all of us, it 'll be the best thing that 's happened yet. An' I want you to understan', Mr. Craig, that nothin' 's goin' to be said or done to make your wife feel bad; an' there 's no need of her hearin' about what 's been done or what 's goin' to be done. But I 'll say for her, that though, of course, Mr. Enderton is her father and she looks up to him as such, she 's a mighty deal livelier and gayer-hearted when he 's away than when he 's with her. An' as for the rest of us, there 's no use sayin' anythin' about our resignedness to the loss of his company."

"I should say so," said Mrs. Aleshine; "for if there ever was a man who thought of himself ninety-nine times before he thought of anybody else once, an' then as like as not to forgit that once, he 's the man. An' it 's not, by no means, that I 'm down on missionaries, for it 's many a box I 've made up for 'em, an' never begrudged neither money nor trouble, an' will do it ag'in many times, I hope. But he ought n't to be called one, havin' given it up,— unless they gave him up,

which there 's no knowin' which it was,— for if there 's anything which shows the good in a man, it 's his bein' willin' to give up the comforts of a Christian land an' go an' convert heathens ; though bein' willin' to give up the heathens an' go for the comforts shows him quite different, besides, as like as not, chargin' double, an' only half convertin'."

Mr. Dusante was fully determined to go on with us until he had recovered possession of the ginger-jar. His courteous feelings towards Mrs. Craig and myself prevented his saying much about Mr. Enderton, but I had good reason to believe that his opinions in regard to my father-in-law were not very different from those of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine. Ever since Mr. Enderton had shown his petulant selfishness, when obliged to give up his room at the railroad station for the use of the women of his party, Mr. Dusante had looked upon him coldly, and the two had had but little to say to each other.

We were all very glad that our pleasant party was not to be broken up ; and although there was no resignation at the absence of the ginger-jar, we started on our journey the next day in a pleasanter mood for the absence of Mr. Enderton. Before we left, Mr. Dusante sent a telegram to Kearney Junction, to be delivered to Mr. En-

derton when he arrived there. What this message was I do not know, but I imagine its tone was decided.

Our journey to Chicago was a pleasant one. We had now all become very well acquainted with each other, and there was no discordant element in the combined party. Some of us were a little apprehensive of trouble, or annoyance at least, awaiting us in Chicago, but we did not speak of it; and while Ruth knew nothing of her father's misbehavior, it might have been supposed that the rest had forgotten it.

At Chicago we went at once to Brandiger's Hotel, and there we found, instead of Mr. Enderton, a letter from him to Ruth. It read as follows:

My Dear Daughter: I have determined not to wait here, as originally intended, but to go on by myself. I am sorry not to meet you here, but it will not be long before we are together again, and you know I do not like to travel with a party. Its various members always incommode me in one way or another. I had proposed to go to Philadelphia and wait for you there, but have since concluded to stop at Meadowville, a village in the interior of Pennsylvania, where, as they have informed me, the two women, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, reside. I wish to see the party all together before I take final leave of them, and I suppose the two women will not consent to go any farther than the country town in which they live. Inclosed is a note

to your husband relating to business matters. I hope that he will take the best of care of you during the rest of the journey, and thus very much oblige

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

This was my note:

MR. CRAIG. SIR: I should have supposed that you would have been able to prevent the insolent messages which have been telegraphed to me from some members of your party, but it is my lot to be disappointed in those in whom I trust. I shall make no answer to these messages, but will say to you that I am not to be browbeaten in my intention to divide among its rightful claimants the money now in my possession. It is not that I care for the comparatively paltry sum that will fall to myself and my daughter, but it is the principle of the matter for which I am contending. It was due to me that the amount should have been returned to me, and to no other, for me to make the proper division. I therefore rest upon my principles and my rights; and, desiring to avoid needless altercations, shall proceed to Meadowville, where, when the rest of my party arrive, I shall justly apportion the money. I suppose the man Dusante will not be foolish enough to protract his useless journey farther than Chicago. It is your duty to make him see the impropriety of so doing.

Yours, etc.,

D. J. ENDERTON.

Ruth's letter was shown to all the party, and mine in private to Mr. Dusante, Mrs. Lecks, and Mrs. Aleshine. When the first moments of astonishment were over, Mrs. Lecks exclaimed:

"Well, after all, I don't know that I 'm so very sorry that the old sneak has done this, for now we 're rid of him for the rest of the trip; an' I 'm pretty certain, from the way he writes, that he has n't dipped into that jar yet. We 've skeered him from doin' that."

"But the impidence of him!" said Mrs. Aleshine. "Think of his goin' to the very town where we live an' gittin' there fust! He 'll be settin' on that tavern porch with every loafer in the place about him, an' tellin' 'em the whole story of what happened to us from beginning to end, till by the time we git there it 'll be all over the place an' as stale as last week's bread."

"'The man Dusante,'" quietly remarked that individual, "will not abandon the purpose of his journey. He left his island to place in the hands of Mrs. Lecks, on behalf of her party, the ginger-jar with the money inclosed. He will therefore go on with you to Meadowville, and will there make formal demand, and, if necessary, legal requisition, for the possession of that jar and that money; after which he will proceed to carry out his original intentions."

We all expressed our pleasure at having him, with his ladies, as companions for the remainder of our journey, and Mrs. Lecks immediately

offered them the hospitalities of her house for as long a time as they might wish to stay with her.

"The weather there," she said, "is often splendid till past Thanksgivin' Day, an' nobody could be welcomer than you."

"I 'd have asked you myself," said Mrs. Aleshine, "if Mrs. Lecks had n't done it,— which of course she would, bein' alive,— but I 'm goin' to have Mr. Craig an' his wife, an' as our houses is near, we 'll see each other all the time. An' if Mr. Enderton chooses to stay awhile at the tavern, he can come over to see his daughter whenever he likes. I 'll go as fur as that, though no further can I go. I 'm not the one to turn anybody from my door, be he heathen, or jus' as bad, or wuss. But tea once, or perhaps twice, is all that I can find it in my heart to offer that man after what he 's done."

As the Dusantes and Ruth expressed a desire to see something of Chicago, where they had never been before, we remained in this city for two days, feeling that as Mr. Enderton would await our coming, there was no necessity for haste.

Early in the afternoon of the second day I went into the parlor of the hotel, where I expected to find our party prepared for a sight-seeing excursion ; but I found the room tenanted only by Mrs.

Aleshine, who was sitting with her bonnet and wraps on, ready to start forth. I had said but a few words to her when Mrs. Lecks entered, bonnetless and shawlless, and with her knitting in her hand. She took a seat in a large easy-chair, put on her spectacles, and proceeded to knit.

"Mrs. Lecks!" exclaimed her friend in surprise, "don't you intend goin' out this afternoon?"

"No," said Mrs. Lecks. "I 've seen all I want to see, an' I 'm goin' to stay in the house an' keep quiet."

"Is n't Mr. Dusante goin' out this afternoon?" asked Mrs. Aleshine.

Mrs. Lecks laid her knitting in her lap; then she took off her spectacles, folded them, and placed them beside the ball of yarn; and, turning her chair around, she faced her friend. "Barb'ry Aleshine," said she, speaking very deliberately, "has any such a thing got into your mind as that I 'm settin' my cap at Mr. Dusante?"

"I don't say you have, an' I don't say you have n't," answered Mrs. Aleshine, her fat hands folded on her knees, and her round face shining from under her new bonnet with an expression of hearty good-will, "but this I will say,— an' I don't care who hears it,— that if you was to set your cap at Mr. Dusante there need n't nobody

say anything agin it, so long as you are content. He is n't what I 'd choose for you, if I had the choosin', for I 'd git one with an American name an' no islands. But that 's neither here nor there, for you 're a grown woman an' can do your own choosin'. An' whether there 's any choosin' to be done is your own business too, for it 's full eleven years sence you 've been done with widder fixin's; an' if Mr. Lecks was to rise up out of his grave this minute, he could n't put his hand on his heart an' say that you had n't done your full duty by him, both before an' after he was laid away. An' so, if you did want to do choosin', an' made up your mind to set your cap at Mr. Dusante, there 's no word to be said. Both of you is ripe-aged an' qualified to know your own minds, an' both of you is well off enough, to all intents an' purposes, to settle down together, if so inclined. An' as to his sister, I don't expect she will be on his hands for long. An' if you can put up with an adopted mother-in-law, that 's your business, not mine; though I allus did say, Mrs. Lecks, that if you 'd been 'Piscopalian, you 'd been Low Church."

"Is that all?" said Mrs. Lecks.

"Yes," replied the other; "it 's all I have to say jus' now, though more might come to me if I gave my mind to it."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Lecks, "I 've somethin' to say on this p'int, and I 'm very glad Mr. Craig is here to hear it. If I had a feelin' in the direction of Mr. Dusante that he was a man, though not exactly what I might wish, havin' somethin' of foreign manners with ties in the Sandwich Islands, which I should n't have had so if I 'd had the orderin' of it, who was still a Christian gentleman,— as showed by his acts, not his words,— a lovin' brother; an' a kind an' attentive son by his own adoption; and who would make me a good husband for the rest of our two lives; then I 'd go and I 'd set my cap at him — not bold nor flauntin', nor unbecomin' to a woman of my age, but just so much settin' of it at him, that if he had any feelin's in my direction, and thought, although it was rather late in life for him to make a change, that if he was goin' to do it he 'd rather make that change with a woman who had age enough, and experience enough in downs as well as ups, and in married life as well as single, to make him feel that as he got her so he 'd always find her; then I say all he 'd have to do would be to come to me an' say what he thought, an' I 'd say what I thought, an' the thing would be settled, an' nobody in this world need have one word to say, except to wish us joy, an' then go along and attend to their own business.

"But now I say to you, Barb'ry Aleshine, an' just the same to you, Mr. Craig, that I have n't got no such feelin's in the direction of Mr. Dusante, an' I don't intend to set my cap at him, an' if he wore such a thing and set it at me, I 'd say to him, kind though firm, that he could put it straight again as far as I was concerned; an' that if he chose to set it at any other woman, if the nearest an' dearest friend I have on earth, I 'd do what I could to make their married lives as happy as they could be under the circumstances; and no matter what happened, I would n't say one word, though I might think what I pleased. An' now you have it, all straight and plain: if I wanted to set caps, I 'd set 'em; and if I did n't want to set 'em, I would n't. I don't want to, and I don't."

And, putting on her spectacles, she resumed her knitting.

Mrs. Aleshine turned upon her friend a beaming face.

"Mrs. Lecks," she said, "your words has lifted a load from off my mind. It would n't ha' broke me down, an' you would n't never have knowed I carried it; but it 's gone, an' I 'm mighty glad of it. An' as for me an' my cap,— an' when you spoke of nearest and dearest friends, you could n't meant nobody but me,— you need n't be

afraid. No matter what I was, nor what he was, nor what I thought of him, nor what he thought of me, I could n't never say to my son when he comes to his mother's arms, all the way from Japan: 'George, here 's a Frenchman who I give to you for a father!'"

Here I burst out laughing, but Mrs. Lecks gravely remarked: "Now I hope this business of cap-settin' is settled an' done with."

"Which it is," said Mrs. Aleshine, as she rose to meet the rest of our party as they entered the room.

For several days I could not look upon the dignified and almost courtly Mr. Dusante without laughing internally and wondering what he would think if he knew how, without the slightest provocation on his side, a matrimonial connection with him had been discussed by these good women, and how the matter had been finally settled. I think he would have considered this the most surprising incident in the whole series of his adventures.

On our journey from Chicago to the little country town in the interior of Pennsylvania we made a few stops at points of interest for the sake of Ruth and the Dusante ladies, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine generously consenting to these delays, although I knew they felt impatient to reach

their homes. They were now on most social terms with Mrs. Dusante, and the three chatted together like old friends.

"I asked her if we might call her Emily," said Mrs. Aleshine in confidence to me, "an' she said, 'yes,' an' we 're goin' to do it. I 've all along wanted to, because it seemed to come nat'ral, considerin' we knowed 'em as Emily and Lucille before we set eyes on 'em. But as long as I had that load on my mind about Mrs. Lecks and Mr. Dusante, I could n't 'Emily' his adopted mother. My feelin's would n't ha' stood it. But now it 's all right; an' though Emily is n't the woman I expected her to be, Lucille is the very picter of what I thought she was. And as for Emily, I never knowed a nicer-mannered lady, an' more willin' to learn from people that 's had experience, than she is."

We arrived at Meadowville early in the afternoon, and when our party alighted from the train we were surprised not to see Mr. Enderton on the platform of the little station. Instead of him, there stood three persons whose appearance amazed and delighted us. They were the red-bearded coxswain and the two sailor men, all in neat new clothes and with their hands raised in maritime salute.

There was a cry of joy. Mrs. Aleshine dropped

her bag and umbrella, and rushed towards them with outstretched hands. In a moment Mrs. Lecks, Ruth, and myself joined the group, and greeted warmly our nautical companions of the island.

The Dusante party, when they were made acquainted with the mariners, were almost as much delighted as we were, and Mr. Dusante expressed in cordial words his pleasure in meeting the other members of the party to whom his island had given refuge.

"I am so glad to see you," said Mrs. Aleshine, "that I don't know my bonnet from my shoes! But how, in the name of all that 's wonderful, did you git here?"

"'T ain't much of a story," said the coxswain, "an' this is just the whole of it. When you left us at 'Frisco we felt pretty downsome, an' the more that way because we could n't find no vessel that we cared to ship on; an' then there come to town the agent of the house that owned our brig, and we was paid off for our last v'yage. Then, when we had fitted ourselves out with new togs, we began to think different about this shippin' on board a merchant vessel, an' gittin' cussed at an' livin' on hard-tack an' salt prog, an' jus' as like as not the ship springin' a leak an' all hands pump-

in' night an' day, an' goin' to Davy Jones after all. An' after talkin' this all over, we was struck hard on the weather bow with a feelin' that it was a blamed sight better — beggin' your pardon, ma'am — to dig garden-beds in nice soft dirt, an' plant peas, an' ketch fish, an' all that kind of shore work, an' eatin' them good things you used to cook for us, Mrs. Aleshine, and dancin' horn-pipes fur ye, an' tamin' birds when our watch was off. Was n't that so, Jim an' Bill?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said the black-bearded sailor men.

"Then says I, 'Now look here, mates, don't let 's go and lark away all this money, but take it an' make a land trip to where Mrs. Aleshine lives,' which port I had the name of on a piece of paper which you give me, ma'am."

And here Mrs. Aleshine nodded vigorously, not being willing to interrupt this entrancing story.

"'An' if she 's got another garden, an' wants it dug in, an' things planted, an' fish caught, an' any other kind of shore work done, why, we 're the men for her; an' we 'll sign the papers for as long a v'yage as she likes, an' stick by her in fair weather or foul, bein' good for day work an' night work, an' allus ready to fall in when she passes the word.' Ain't that so, Jim and Bill?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" returned the sailor men with sonorous earnestness.

"Upon my word!" cried Mrs. Aleshine, tears of joy running down her cheeks, "them papers shall be signed if I have to work night an' day to find somethin' for you to do. I 've got a man takin' keer of my place now; but many a time have I said to myself that, if I had anybody I could trust to do the work right, I 'd buy them two fields of Squire Ramsey's an' go into the onion business. An' now you sailor men has come like three sea angels, an' if it suits you we 'll go into the onion business on sheers."

"That suits us tip-top, ma'am," said the coxswain; "an' we 'll plant inyans for ye on the shears, on the stocks, or in the dry-dock. It don't make no dif'rence to us where you have 'em; jes pass the word."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Lecks, "I don't know how that 's goin' to work, but we won't talk about it now. An' so you came straight on to this place?"

"That did we, ma'am," said the coxswain. "An' when we got here we found the parson, but none of you folks. That took us aback a little at fust, but he said he did n't live here, an' you was comin' pretty soon. An' so we took lodgin's at the

tavern, an' for three days we 've been down here to meet every train, expectin' you might be on it."

Our baggage had been put on the platform, the train had moved on, and we had stood engrossed in the coxswain's narrative, but now I thought it necessary to make a move. There was but one small vehicle to hire at the station. This would hold but two persons, and in it I placed Mrs. Dusante and Ruth, the first being not accustomed to walking, and the latter very anxious to meet her father. I ordered the man to drive them to the inn, which was about a mile from the station, where we would stay until Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine should get their houses properly aired and ready for our reception.

"Mrs. Craig will be glad to get to the tavern and see her father," said Mrs. Aleshine. "I expect he forgot all about its bein' time for the train to come."

"Bless you, ma'am!" exclaimed the coxswain, "is she gone to the tavern? The parson 's not there!"

"Where is he, then?" asked Mrs. Aleshine.

"He 's at your house, ma'am," replied the coxswain.

"An' what in the name of common sense is he doin' at my house?" exclaimed Mrs. Ale-

shine, her eyes sparkling with amazement and indignation.

"Well, ma'am, for one thing," said the coxswain, "he 's had the front door painted."

"What!" cried Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine in one breath.

"Yes," continued the coxswain; "the parson said he hated to see men hangin' around doin' nothin'. An' then he looked about, an' said the paint was all wore off the front door, an' we might as well go to work an' paint that, an' he sent Jim to a shop to git the paint an' brushes ——"

"An' have 'em charged to me?" cried Mrs. Aleshine.

"Yes, ma'am," continued the coxswain. "An' Jim an' Bill holy-stoned all the old paint off the door an' I painted it, havin' done lots of that sort of thing on shipboard; an' I think it 's a pretty good job, ma'am — red at top and bottom an' white in the middle, like a steamer's smoke-stack."

Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine looked at each other. "An' he told you to do that?" said Mrs. Lecks.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the coxswain. "The parson said he never liked to be nowhere without doin' what good he could. An' there was some other paintin' he talked of havin' done, but we

ain't got at it yit. I s'posed he was actin' under your orders, an' I hope I have n't done no wrong, ma'am."

"You 're not a bit to blame," said Mrs. Aleshine; "but I'll look into this thing. No fear about that! An' how did he come to go to my house? An' how did he get in, I 'd like to know?"

"All I know about that," said the coxswain, "is what the gal that 's livin' there told me, which she did along of askin' us if we was comin' to live there too, an' if she should rig up beds for us somewhere in the top-loft, but we told her no, not havin' no orders, an' payin' our own way at the tavern. She said, said she, that the parson come there an' 'lowed he was a friend of Mrs. Aleshine's an' travelin' with her, an' that if she was at home she would n't let him stay at no tavern; an' that knowin' her wishes he 'd come right there, an' 'spected to be took care of till she come. She said she felt oncertain about it, but she tuck him in till she could think it over, an' then we come an' certified that he was the parson who 'd been along with Mrs. Aleshine an' the rest of us. Arter that she thought it was all right, an', beggin' your pardon if we was wrong, so did Jim an' Bill an' me, ma'am."

"Now," exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, "if that is n't

exactly like Elizabeth Grootenheimer! To think of Elizabeth Grootenheimer thinkin'! The Grootenheimers always was the dumbest family in the township, an' Elizabeth Grootenheimer is the dumbest of 'em all! I did say to myself when I went away: 'Now, Elizabeth Grootenheimer is so stone dumb that she'll jus' stay here an' do the little I tell her to do, an' has n't sense enough to git into no mischief.' An' now, look at her!"

She waved her hand in the direction of the invisible Elizabeth Grootenheimer.

Mrs. Lecks had said very little during this startling communication, but her face had assumed a stern and determined expression. Now she spoke.

"I guess we 've heard about enough, an' we 'd better be steppin' along an' see what else Mr. Enderton an' Elizabeth Grootenheimer is doin'."

The homes of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine were not far from each other, and were situated about midway between the station and the village inn, and in the direction of these our party now started. Mrs. Aleshine, contrary to her custom, took the lead, and walked away with strides of unusual length. Mrs. Lecks was close behind her, followed by the two Dusantes and myself, while the three mariners, who insisted upon carrying all the hand-baggage, brought up the rear.

We stepped quickly, for we were all much interested in what might happen next; and very soon we reached Mrs. Aleshine's house. It was a good-sized and pleasant-looking dwelling, painted white, with green shutters and with a long covered piazza at the front. Between the road and the house was a neat yard with grass and flower beds, and from the gate of the picket-fence in front of the yard a brick-paved path led up to the house.

Our approach had been perceived, for on the piazza, in front of the gayly painted door, stood Mr. Enderton, erect and with a bland and benignant smile upon his face. One hand was stretched out as if in welcome, and with the other he gracefully held the ginger-jar, now divested of its wrappings.

At this sight Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine made a simultaneous dash at the gate, but it was locked. The two women stamped their feet in fury.

"Put down that jar!" shouted Mrs. Lecks.

"Elizabeth Grootenheimer! Elizabeth Grootenheimer!" screamed Mrs. Aleshine. "Come here and open this gate."

"Break it down!" said Mrs. Lecks, turning to the sailors.

"Don't you do it!" exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, throwing herself in front of it. "Don't you break my gate! Elizabeth Grootenheimer!"

"My friends," said Mr. Enderton in clear, distinct tones, "be calm. I have the key of that gate in my pocket. I locked it because I feared that on your first arrival you would hurry up to the house in a promiscuous way, and give heed to irrelevant matters. I wished to address you in a body and in a position where your attention would not be diverted from me. I hold here, my friends, the receptacle containing the money which, under a misapprehension, was paid for our board while on a desert island. This money I have taken care of, and have carefully guarded for the benefit of us all. Unfortunately objections have arisen to this guardianship, which were forwarded to me by telegraph, but I have not heeded them. If you cannot see for yourselves the propriety of my assumption of this trust, I will not now undertake to enlighten you. But I hope there is no necessity for this, for, having had time to give the matter your fullest attention, I doubt not that you entirely agree with me. I will merely add, for I see you are impatient, that the sum which will fall to the share of each of us is comparatively insignificant, and in itself not worth

striving for; but what I have done has been for the sake of principle. For the sake of principle I have insisted that this money should be received by its rightful owners; for the sake of principle I assumed the custody of it; and for the sake of principle I shall now empty the contents of this jar — which by me has not been examined or touched — upon the floor of this piazza, and I shall then proceed to divide said contents into five suitable portions — the three mariners, as I understand, having paid no board. The gate can then be opened, and each one can come forward and take the portion which belongs to him or to her. The portion of my daughter, whom I saw pass here in a carriage, going, doubtless, to the inn, will be taken charge of by myself."

"You man!" shrieked Mrs. Lecks, shaking her fist over the fence, "if you as much as lift that paper of fish-hooks from out the top of that ginger-jar, I 'll ——"

Here she was interrupted by the loud, clear voice of Mr. Dusante, who called out: "Sir, I require you to put down that jar, which is my property."

"I 'll let you know," said Mrs. Lecks, "that other people have principles!"

But what more she said was drowned by the voice of Mrs. Aleshine, who screamed for Eliza-

beth Grootenheimer, and who was now so much excited that she was actually trying to break open her own gate.

I called out to Mr. Enderton not to make trouble by disturbing the contents of the jar; and even Miss Lucille, who was intensely amused at the scene, could be heard joining her voice to the general clamor.

But the threats and demands of our united party had no effect upon Mr. Enderton. He stood up, serene and bland, fully appreciating the advantage of having the key of the gate's padlock in his pocket and the ginger-jar in his hand.

"I will now proceed," said he. But at that moment his attention was attracted by the three mariners, who had clambered over the pointed pales of the fence and who now appeared on the piazza, Bill to the right hand of Mr. Enderton, Jim to the left, and the red-bearded coxswain at his back. They all seemed to speak at once, though what they said we could not hear, nothing but a few hoarse mutterings coming down to us.

But in consequence of what Bill said, Mr. Enderton handed him the key of the gate; and in consequence of what Jim said, Mr. Enderton delivered to him the ginger-jar; and in consequence of what the coxswain said, he and Mr. Enderton

walked off the piazza; and the two proceeded to a distant corner of the yard, where they stood out of the way, as it were, while the gate was opened. Bill bungled a little, but the padlock was soon removed, and we all hurried through the gate and up to the piazza, where Jim still stood, the ginger-jar held reverently in his hands.

The coxswain now left Mr. Enderton, and that gentleman proceeded to the open gate, through which he passed into the road, and then turned, and in a loud and severe tone addressed Mrs. Aleshine:

"I leave your inhospitable house and go to join my daughter at the inn, where I request you to send my valise and umbrella as soon as possible."

Mrs. Aleshine's indignation at this invasion of her home and this trampling on her right to open her own gate had entirely driven away her accustomed geniality, and in angry tones she cried:

"Jus' you stop at that paint-shop when you git to the village, an' pay for the paint you had charged to me; an' when you 've done that you can send for your things."

"Come, now, Barb'ry," said Mrs. Lecks, "don't let your feelin's run away with you. You ought to be thankful that he 's let you off so easy, an' that he 's gone."

"I 'm all that," said Mrs. Aleshine; "an' on second thoughts, every whip-stitch of his bag and baggage shall be trundled after him as soon as I kin git it away."

We all now stood upon the piazza, and Mrs. Aleshine, in calmer tones, but with her face still flushed from her recent excitement, turned to us and said: "Now, is n't this a pretty comin' home? My front gate fastened in my very face; my front door painted red and white; the inside of the house, as like as not, turned upside down by that man jus' as much as the outside; an' where in the world, I 'd like to know, is Elizabeth Grootenheimer?"

"Now, don't you be too hard on her," said Mrs. Lecks, "after havin' been away from her so long. I have n't a doubt she 's feedin' the pigs; and you know very well she never would leave them as long as she felt they needed her. You need n't mind if your house is upset, for none of us is comin' in, havin' only intended to see you to your door, which I must say is a pretty blazin' one."

"And now, Mrs. Lecks," said Mr. Dusante, taking, as he spoke, the ginger-jar from the hand of Jim, "I think this is a suitable opportunity for me to accomplish the object for which my present

journey was undertaken, and to return to you the contents of this jar."

"Which," said Mrs. Lecks, in a very decided tone, "I don't take now no more 'n I did before."

Mr. Dusante looked surprised and troubled. After all the dangers and adventures through which that ginger-jar had gone, I believe that he expected Mrs. Lecks would at last relent and consent to accept it from him.

"Now, look here," said Mrs. Aleshine, "don't let us have any more fuss about the ginger-jar, or anything else. Let 's put off talkin' about that till we 're all settled and fixed. It won't do for you to take the jar to the tavern with you, Mr. Dusante, for like as not Mr. Enderton will git hold of it ag'in, an' I know Mrs. Lecks won't let it come into her house; so, if you like, you may jus' leave it here for the present, and you may make up your minds nobody 'll touch it while I 'm about. An' about I intend to be!"

This arrangement was gladly agreed upon, and the jar being delivered to Mrs. Aleshine, we took our leave of her.

Mrs. Lecks found no difficulty in entering her gate, where she was duly welcomed by a man and his wife she had left in charge, while the Dusantes and myself walked on to the inn, or "Hotel," as

its sign imported, about which the greater part of the little town clustered. The three mariners remained behind to await further orders from Mrs. Aleshine.

By the afternoon of the next day the abodes of those two most energetic and capable housewives, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, were fully prepared for the reception of their visitors, and the Dusante family were ensconced beneath the roof of the one, while my wife and I were most warmly welcomed at the gayly adorned door of the other.

Mr. Enderton remained at the inn, where he found very comfortable quarters, an arrangement satisfactory to all parties.

In Mrs. Aleshine's dwelling, where, from the very first, Lucille took her position as a most constant visitor, being equally welcomed by Ruth and the mistress of the house, all was satisfaction and high good humor. The ceaseless activity and cheerful spirits of our hostess seemed to animate us all. At Mrs. Lecks's home the case was different. There, I could plainly see, there was a certain uneasiness amounting almost to stiffness between Mrs. Lecks and Mr. Dusante. The latter had not accomplished the purpose for which he had made this long journey; and though, if things had turned out as he wished, he would have

been very glad to be the guest of Mrs. Lecks, still, under the present circumstances, the situation did not suit him. Mrs. Lecks, too, possessed an unsettled mind. She did not know when Mr. Dusante would again endeavor to force back upon her the board-money in the ginger-jar, and in this state of uneasy expectancy she was not at her best.

"He 's not satisfied," said she to me, on the morning after the Dusantes had come to her; "he wants to do somethin', or else to go away. I wish that ginger-jar had dropped into the bottom of the sea while he was bringin' it, or else had smashed itself into a thousand bits while he was slidin' down the mountain, and the money had melted itself into the snow. S'posin' at the end of the week he was to come to me and offer to pay me board for himself and his family, sayin' that was no more than I 'd done to him! Of course the two cases are not a bit alike; for we went to his house strangers, without leave or license, while he comes to mine as a friend, bein' fully invited and pressed. But I don't suppose I could make him see it in that light, and it worries me."

I was convinced that something ought to be done to end this unpleasant state of affairs, and I took my wife and Miss Lucille into council on the

subject. After we had deliberated a little while an idea came to Ruth.

"In my opinion," said she, "the best thing we can do with that board-money is to give it to those three sailors. They are poor and will be glad to get it; Mr. Dusante and Mrs. Lecks ought to be fully satisfied, for the one does n't keep it, and the other does n't take it back, and I 'm sure that this plan will please all the rest of us."

This proposition was agreed to by the council, and I was appointed to go immediately and lay it before the parties interested.

Mr. Dusante gave his ready consent to this proposal. "It is not what I intended to do," said he, "but it amounts to almost the same thing. The money is in fact restored to its owners, and they agree to make a certain disposition of it. I am satisfied."

Mrs. Lecks hesitated a little. "All right," said she. "He takes the money and gives it to who he chooses. I 've nothin' to say against it."

Of course no opposition to the plan was to be expected from anybody else, except Mr. Enderton. But when I mentioned it to him I found, to my surprise, that he was not unwilling to agree to it. Half closing the book he had been reading, he said: "What I have done was on behalf of prin-

ciple. I did not believe, and do not believe, that upon an entirely deserted island money should be paid for board. I paid it under protest, and I do not withdraw that protest. According to all the laws of justice and hospitality the man who owned that island should not retain that money, and Mrs. Lecks had no right to insist upon such retention. But if it is proposed to give the sum total to three mariners, who paid no board and to whom the gift is an absolute charity, I am content. To be sure, they interfered with me at a moment when I was about to make a suitable settlement of the matter, but I have no doubt they were told to do so; and I must admit that while they carried out their orders with a certain firmness characteristic of persons accustomed to unreasoning obedience, they treated me with entire respect. If equal respect had been shown to me at the beginning of these disputes, it would have been much better for all concerned."

And opening his book, he recommenced his reading.

That afternoon all of us, except Mr. Enderton, assembled on Mrs. Aleshine's piazza to witness the presentation of the board-money. The three sailors, who had been informed of the nature of the proceedings, stood in line on the second step of

the piazza, clad in their best toggery, and with their new tarpaulin hats in their hands. Mrs. Aleshine went into the house and soon reappeared, carrying the ginger-jar, which she presented to Mr. Dusante. That gentleman took it, and stood holding it for a moment as if he were about to speak; but even if he had intended to say anything he had no further opportunity, for Mrs. Lecks now stepped forward and addressed him:

"Mr. Dusante," said she, "from what I have seen of you myself and heard tell of you from others, I believe you are a man who tries to do his duty, as he sees it, with a single heart and no turnin' from one side to the other. You made up your mind that you 'd travel over the whole world, if it had to be done, with that ginger-jar and the board-money inside of it, till you 'd found the people who 'd been livin' in your house; and then that you 'd give back that jar, jus' as you 'd found it, to the person who 'd took upon herself the over-seein' of the reg'lar payin' of the money, and the puttin' of it therein. With that purpose in your mind you carried that jar over the ocean; you wandered with it up and down California; and holdin' it tight fast in your arms, you slid down the slipperiest mountain that was ever made yet, I believe, and if it had been your only infant child,

you could n't have held it firmer, nor regarded it more careful. Through ups and downs, and thicks and smooths, you carried that jar or followed it, and for the sake of doin' what you 'd set your mind on you came all the way to this place; to which, if it had n't been for that one idea, it is n't likely you 'd ever dreamed of comin'. Now, Mr. Dusante, we 've all agreed on what we think is the right thing to do, and you agreed with us, but I can see by your face that you 're disapp'inted. The thing you set out to do you have n't done; an' I 'm not goin' to have it to say to myself that you was the only one of all of us that was n't satisfied, and that I was the stumblin'-block that stood in your way. So I 'll back down from sayin' that I 'd never touch that jar again, and you can put it into my hands, as you set out to do."

Mr. Dusante made no answer, but stepped forward, and taking Mrs. Lecks's large brown and work-worn hand, he respectfully touched it with his lips. It is not probable that Mrs. Lecks's hand had ever before been kissed. It is not probable that she had ever seen any one kiss the hand of another. But the hard sense and keen insight of that independent country-woman made her instantly aware of what was meant by that old-fashioned act of courteous homage. Her tall form

grew more erect; she slightly bowed her head; and received the salute with a quiet dignity which would have become a duchess.

This little scene touched us all, and Mrs. Aleshine afterwards informed me that for a moment she had n't a dry eye in her head.

Mr. Dusante now handed the ginger-jar to Mrs. Lecks, who immediately stepped towards Ruth and Lucille.

"You two young ones," she said, "can jus' take this jar, an' your hands can be the first to lift off that paper of fish-hooks and take out the money, which you will then divide among our good friends, these sailor men."

Ruth and Lucille immediately sat down on the floor of the piazza and the one emptied the board-money into the lap of the other, where it was speedily divided into three equal portions, one of which was placed in the hands of each mariner.

The men stood motionless, each holding his money in his open right hand, and then the red-bearded coxswain spoke.

"It ain't for me, nor for Bill, nor for Jim nuther, to say a word agin what you all think is right and square. We 've stood by ye an' obeyed orders since we first shipped on that island, an' we intend to do so straight along, don't we, Jim an' Bill?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Jim and Bill, in hearty hoarse response.

"There 's some of ye, 'specially Mrs. Aleshine, though meanin' no disrespec' to anybody else, that we 'd foller to the cross-trees of the top-gallant mast of the tallest ship that ever floated in the middle of the ragin'est typhoon that ever blowed. Would n't we, Jim and Bill?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" sang out Jim and Bill.

"But though we stand ready to obey orders," said the coxswain, "we made up our minds, when we heard what was goin' to be done, that we 'd listen keerful fer one thing, an' we have listened keerful an' we have n't heard that one thing, an' that thing was what we should do with this money. An' not havin' heard it, an' so bein' under no orders as to the spendin' of it, we take the money, an' thank you kindly, one an all. Don't we, Jim and Bill?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Jim and Bill.

And into the pocket of each mariner clinked the money.

Mr. Dusante now took up the ginger-jar and approached Mrs. Lecks. "I hope, madam," he said, "that as the subject of our little differences has now been removed from this jar, you will consent to accept it from me as a memento of the some-

what remarkable experiences through which it has accompanied us."

"Take it, sir?" said she. "To be sure I will. An' very glad am I to get it. As long as I live it shall stand on the mantel-piece in my parlor; an' when I die it shall be left to my heirs, to be taken care of as long as it holds together."

Every reason for dissatisfaction having now been banished from our little company, we all settled down for a season of enjoyment. Even Mr. Enderton, who had found on the top shelf of a closet in his room a lot of old leather-bound books, appeared to be in a state of perfect content. To the Dusantes a residence in this absolutely rural portion of our Middle States in the autumnal season was an entirely novel experience. The crisp and invigorating air, the mists and the glowing hues of the Indian summer time, the softness of the sunshine, and even those masses of limbs and twigs which had already dropped their leaves and spread themselves in a delicate network against the clear blue sky, were all full of a novel beauty for these people who had lived so long in tropical lands and among perennial foliage, and had never known the delights of an American country life out of season. Having enjoyed Mrs. Lecks's hospitality for a suitable period, they pro-

posed to that sensible woman that she should receive them as boarders until the winter should set in; and to this practical proposition she gave a ready assent, hoping that the really cold weather would long defer its coming.

Ruth and I established ourselves on the same terms with Mrs. Aleshine. A prolonged holiday from the labors of my business had been the object of my attempted journey to Japan, and I could think of no place where it would better please my young wife and myself to rest for a time than here among these good friends.

A continual source of amusement to us were the acts and doings of Mrs. Aleshine and her three sailor men. These bold mariners had enlisted, soul and body, into the service of the thrifty housewife; and as it was impossible to do anything in connection with the growing of the onions until the desired fields should be acquired and the spring should open, many and diverse were the labors at which the coxswain and those two able-bodied seamen, Bill and Jim, set themselves, or were set by Mrs. Aleshine.

The brilliantly painted front-door, which at first had excited the good woman's ire, gradually came to command her admiration; and when her sailor men had done everything else that they could in

the barns, the fields, or at the wood-pile, she gave them privilege to paint various portions of her property, leaving designs and colors to their own taste and fancy. Whether they milked the cows, cut the wood, or painted the sides of the house, they always worked like good fellows, and in nautical costume. They holy-stoned the front deck, as they called the floor of the piazza, until it seemed sacrilegious to set foot upon it; and when the house and the pale-fence had been suitably painted, they allowed their fancies lofty flights in the decoration of the smaller out-buildings and various objects in the grounds. One of the men had a pocket-chart of the colors adopted by the different steamship companies all over the world, and now smoke-houses, corn-cribs, chicken-houses, and so on, down to pumps and hitching-posts, were painted in great bands of blue-and-red and white-and-black, arranged in alternating orders, until an observer might have supposed that a commercial navy had been sunk beneath Mrs. Aleshine's house-grounds, leaving nothing but its smoke-stacks visible.

The greatest work of decoration, however, was reserved by the red-bearded coxswain for himself, designed by his own brain, and executed by his own hands. This was the tattooing of the barn. Around

this building, the sides of which were already of a color sufficiently resembling a well-tanned human skin, the coxswain painted, in blue spots resembling tattooing, an immense cable passing several times about the structure, a sea-serpent almost as long as the cable, eight anchors, two ships under full sail, with a variety of cannons and flags which filled up all the remaining spaces. This great work was a long time in execution, and before it was half finished its fame had spread over the surrounding country.

The decoration of her premises was greatly enjoyed by Mrs. Aleshine. "It gives 'em somethin' to do," said she, "till the onion-season comes on; it makes 'em happy; an' the leaves an' flowers bein' pretty nigh gone, I like to see the place blossomin' out as if it was a cold-weather garden."

In the evenings, in the large kitchen, the sailor men danced their hornpipes, and around the great fireplace they spun long yarns of haps and mishaps on distant seas. Mrs. Aleshine always, and the rest of us often, sat by the fire and enjoyed these nautical recreations.

"Havin' myself done housekeepin' in the torrid zone," she once said, "a lot of the things they tell come home to me quite nat'ral. An' I'd do anything in the world to make 'em content to live on

dry land like common Christians, instid of cavoortin' about on the pitchin' ocean, runnin' into each other, an' springin' leaks with no likelihood of findin' a furnished island at every p'int where their ship happened to go down."

On one subject only did any trouble now come into the mind of Mrs. Aleshine, and she once had a little talk with me in regard to it.

"I've been afeared from the very beginnin'," she said, "an' after a while I more 'n half believed it, that Elizabeth Grootenheimer was settin' her cap at the coxswain, so I just went to him an' I spoke to him plain. 'This sort o' thing won't do at all,' says I; 'an' although I have n't a doubt you see it for yourself, I thought it my dooty to speak my mind about it. There 's plenty of young women in this township that would make you sailor men fust-rate wives, an' glad enough I 'd be to see you all married an' settled an' gone to farmin' right here amongst us, but Elizabeth Grootenheimer won't do. Settin' aside everythin' else, if there was to be any children, they might be little coxswains, but they 'd be Grootenheimers too; stone-dumb Grootenheimers; an' I tell you plain that this county can't stand no more Grootenheimers!' To which he says, says he, 'I want you to understan', ma'am, that if ever me or Jim or Bill makes

up our mind to set sail for any sort of a weddin' port, we won't weigh anchor till we 've got our clearance papers from you.' By which he meant that he 'd ask my advice about courtin'. An' now my mind is easy, an' I can look ahead with comfort to onion-time."

I found it necessary to go to Philadelphia for a day or two to attend to some business matters; and the evening before I started, the coxswain came to me and asked a favor for himself and his mates.

"It may n't have passed out of your mind, sir," said he, "that when me an' Jim an' Bill took that money that you all give us, which was n't zackly like prize-money, because the rest of the crew, to put it that way, did n't get any, we listened keerful to see if anything was said as to what we was to do with the money; an' nothin' bein' said, we took it, an' we was n't long makin' up our minds as to what we was goin' to do with it. What we wanted to do was to put up some sort of signal what could n't get blowed away, or, more like, a kind of reg'lar moniment as would make them that looked at it remember the rough squalls an' the jolly larks we 've gone through with together, an' it was when we was talkin' about Mrs. Lecks bein' give' the ginger-jar to put on her mantel-

piece an' keep forever, that me an' Jim an' Bill we said, says we, that Mrs. Aleshine should have a ginger-jar too, havin' as much right to one as her mate, an' that that would be the signal-flag or the moniment that we 'd put up. Now, sir, as you 're goin' to town, we ask you to take this money, which is the whole lot that was give' us, an' have a ginger-jar built, jus' the size an' shape an' gen'ral trim of that other one, but of no pottery-stuff, for you kin buy em' jus' like that, an' that ain't what we want. We want her built of good oak, stout an' strong, with live-oak knees inside to keep her stiff an' save her from bein' stove in, in case of a collision. We want her bottom coppered up above the water-line with real silver, an' we want a turtle-back deck with a round hatchway, with a tight-fittin' hatch, jus' like common jars. We want her sides caulked with oakum, an' well scraped an' painted, so that with water inside of her or outside of her she won't leak. An' on the bottom of her, so they kin be seen if she keels over, we wants the names of me, an' Jim, an' Bill, which we 've wrote on this piece of paper. An' on her sides, below the water-line, on the silver copperin' we want the names of all the rest of you, an' the latitood an' longitood of that island, an' anythin' out of the logs that might 'a' been

kep' by any of you, as might help to be remembered the things what happened. An' then, if there's any room left on the copperin' an' any money lef' to pay for 'em, you might have cut on as many anchors, an' hearts, an' bits of cable, an' such like suitable things as would fill up. An' that jar we're goin' to give to Mrs. Aleshine to put on her mantel-piece, to stay there as long as she lives, or anybody that belongs to her. An', by George, sir!" he added behind his hand, although there was nobody to hear, "if ever them two jars run into each other, it won't be Mrs. Aleshine's that 'll go down!"

I undertook this commission, and in due course of time there came to the village the most astonishing ginger-jar that was ever built, and which satisfied the three mariners in every particular. When it was presented to Mrs. Aleshine, her admiration of this work of art, her delight in its ownership, and her gratitude to the donors were alike boundless.

"However could I have had the idee," said she privately to me, "that any one of them noble sailor men could have brought himself down to marry Elizabeth Grootenheimer!"

It was not long after this happy event that another great joy came to Mrs. Aleshine. Her son returned from Japan. He had heard of the loss

of the steamer in which his mother and Mrs. Lecks had set sail, and was in great trouble of mind until he received a letter from his mother which brought him speedily home. He had no intention of settling in Meadowville, but it had been a long time since he had seen his mother.

He was a fine young man, handsome and well educated, and we were all delighted with him; and in a very short time he and Lucille Dusante, being the only young bachelor and maiden of the company, became so intimate and super-friendly that it was easy to see that to Mrs. Aleshine might come the unexpected rapture of eventually being the mother of Lucille.

We staid much later at Meadowville than we had expected. Even after the little hills and vales had been well covered with snow, sleighing and coasting parties, led by the lively new-comer, offered attractions, especially to Lucille, which bound us to the cheery homes of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine. But, after a time, the Dusantes considered it prudent to go to Florida for the rest of the winter; Mr. Enderton had long since read all the books on his closet shelf and departed for New York; and Ruth and I determined that we, too, must move eastward.

But, before our little company separated, Mrs. Aleshine's son and Lucille Dusante had settled it

between them that when the spring-time came they would set sail for a wedding port. This match was a highly satisfactory one to all concerned, for Mr. Dusante could scarcely have found a young brother-in-law who would make his sister so happy, and who was, at the same time, so well fitted by disposition and previous occupation to assist in his increasing business cares.

In the spring the Dusante family came North again and Lucille and her lover were married; and then all of us, except Mr. Enderton, who had obtained a most congenial position as assistant librarian in a public institution seldom visited, gathered at Meadowville to spend a week or two together before Ruth and I repaired to the New England town which was to be our home; and the Dusante family, the young husband included, set out on a tour, partly of business and partly of pleasure, through Canada and the far North-west.

It was arranged that, whenever it should be possible, Lucille and Mrs. Dusante should spend their summers at Meadowville; and as this would also give her much of the society of her son, the heart of Mrs. Aleshine could ask no more.

This visit to Meadowville was in the onion-season; and one morning Ruth and I sat upon a fence and watched the three sailor men busily at

work. The soil looked so fine and smooth that one might almost have supposed that it had been holy-stoned; and the three nautical farmers, in their tight-waisted, loose-bottomed trousers, their tarpaulin hats, and their wide-collared shirts, were seated on the ground at different points, engrossed in the absorbing task of setting out young onions as onions had never been set out before. All the careful attention to patient minutiæ which nautical handiwork had taught them was now displayed in their new vocation. In a portion of the field which had been first planted the onions had sprouted, and we could see evidences of astonishing designs. Here were anchors in onions; hearts in onions; brigs, barks, and schooners in onions; and more things pertaining to ships, the heart's affections, and the raging main outlined in onions than Ruth and I could give names to.

"It seems to me," said I, "that there must have been some sort of enchantment in that little island in the Pacific, for in one way or another it has made us all very happy."

"That is true," answered Ruth; "and, do you know, I believe the cause of a great part of that happiness was the board-money in the ginger-jar!"

THE END.

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